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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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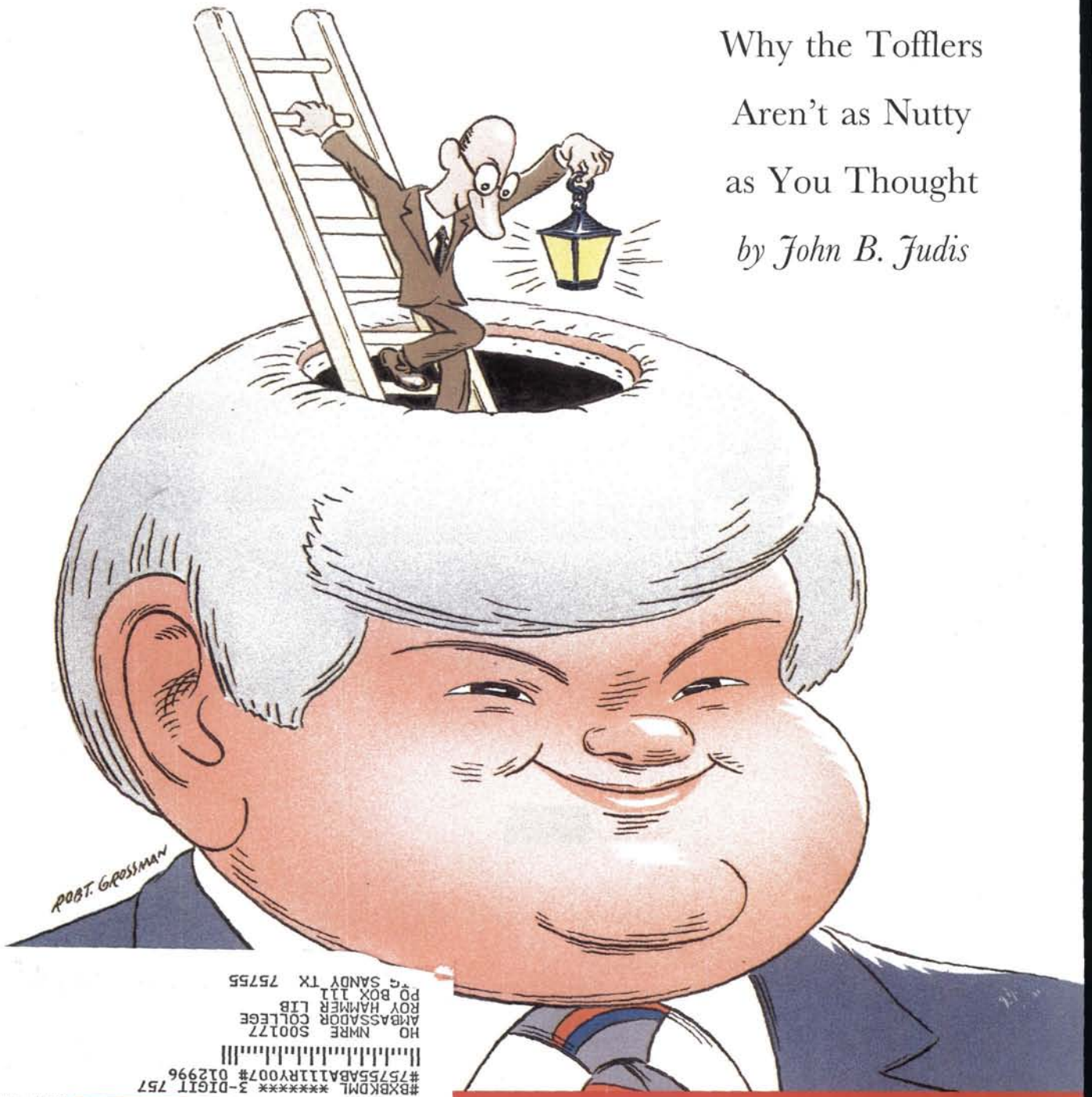
Why the Tofflers Aren't as Nutty as You Thought

by John B. Judis



A Newt Guru Responds—by Peter Green

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

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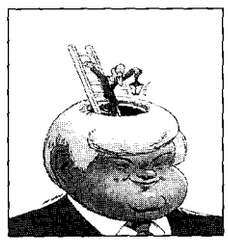

Cover by Robert Grossman and Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 16.

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Mumia's gun, Rorty's truth, Alabama's governor &c.

6 **ROBERT WRIGHT** TRB: SOME LIKE IT HOT The Republicans and global warming.

7 **THE EDITORS** BIG DEAL Ending benefits for additional welfare births has gotten everyone riled up, but it doesn't matter. More money for work does.

8 **NOTEBOOK** The Unabomber gets published, Jesse Helms says thank you &c.

10 **MASHA GESSEN** TEA AND SYMPATHY Russia's court rules on the Chechen war.

11 **MATTHEW COOPER** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: WHAT'S MY LINE? If Congress loves the line-item veto so much—why haven't they passed it?

12 **MICHAEL KINSLEY** BEEN THERE, DONE IT The Republican Medicare plan pushes managed care—where have we heard that before?

14 **PETER GREEN** GREEK TO HIM An open letter to Newt from a classicist whose work he praises, and misunderstands.

16 **JOHN B. JUDIS** NEWT'S NOT-SO-WEIRD GURUS Academics say they're kooks, and liberals say they're big-think apologists for the right. But the Tofflers are neither, and their analysis of changes in the American economy should give Newt little comfort.

26 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: DIVISION, DELAY, DRAG Love across the wall in *The Promise* and an unpersuasive *Persuasion*; in *To Wong Foo* the girls need new lines.

27 **RICHARD WOLIN** HANNAH AND THE MAGICIAN *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger* by Elzbieta Ettinger; *Love and Saint Augustine* by Hannah Arendt

37 **CHRISTOPHER BENFEY** NATIVE AMERICAN *Writing Was Everything* by Alfred Kazin

38 **PAULANN PETERSEN** POEM *Fabrication*

40 **TZVETAN TODOROV** HIGH FIDELITY *The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism* by Octavio Paz

42 **JEFFREY ROSEN** WASHINGTON DIARIST: GROVER

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CORRESPONDENCE

Out of fashion

To the editors:

I am thoroughly disappointed in Jan Breslauer's article "Not-So-Clueless" (September 4) for its implicit celebration of consumerism as a quick response to the issues of race difference and inequality. Breslauer has simply become bored with "artsy" multicultural art, which for her has become formulaic. (I can think of nothing more formulaic than the information and entertainment distributed to those of my age group today.) With the increasing exposure to pre-packaged and processed information through mass media and entertainment, people in my age group risk losing the means and the motivation for the difficult and important discussions of race that no rock band or style of dress could ever address intelligently and fairly.

MARIA CECILIA DIAZ
Los Angeles, California

Death of the author

To the editors:

With reference to the editorial about Mumia Abu-Jamal ("He Shot the Sheriff," September 4), it is Roland Barthes, not Jacques Derrida, who heralded "The Death of the Author" (see Barthes's 1968 essay by that title). Maybe you're confusing Derrida with yet another French theorist, Michel Foucault, who is responsible for asking "What is an author?"!

ANA MITRIC
Charlottesville, Virginia

To the editors:

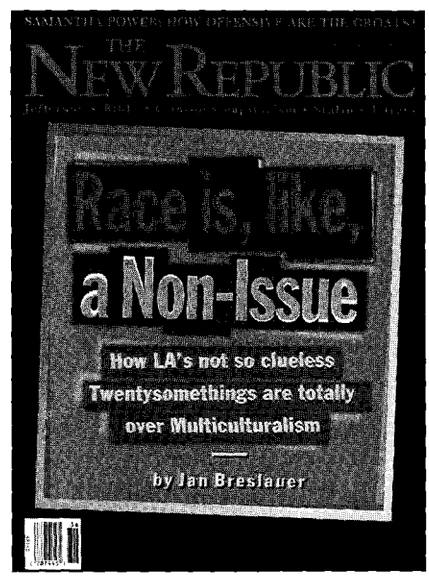
In regards to "He Shot the Sheriff," you make an extraordinary effort to debunk the radical chic around the Mumia Abu-Jamal case but spend far less time on the serious questions about Jamal's trial.

You mention Jamal's .38-caliber pistol, with five shots spent, but leave out the coroner's report indicating that police officer Daniel Faulkner was shot with a .44 and that the police neither tested Jamal's gun, nor Jamal's hands, to see how recently the gun was shot or by whom.

You mention two questionable "key" witnesses for the prosecution but leave out the discrepancies between their original statements and their trial testimony. You also neglect to mention that witnesses for Jamal's defense have come forward since the trial. (They, too, may be "questionable," but that should be up to a jury to decide.)

And, in your rush to condemn Jamal, you leave out what had been one of the state's great pieces of evidence at his original trial: his emergency-room confession, testified to by one of the officers on the scene. Could your omission have anything to do with the fact that the official police report filed by the arresting officer specifically states that Jamal did not confess and that the author of the report happened to be, by strange coincidence, on vacation and unable to testify at Jamal's original trial?

Also by coincidence, on the very day my TNR arrived, *The New York Times* had a page-one story about the unfortunate habit of some Philadelphia police officers to frame African Americans. So far five officers have pleaded guilty, one more is under indictment and almost


THE NEW REPUBLIC
Race is, like, a Non-Issue
How LA's not so clueless Twentysomethings are totally over Multiculturalism
by Jan Breslauer

fifty cases have been reversed. According to the *Times*, hundreds of additional cases and many more officers may be involved.

Under the concept of the presumption of innocence, the verdict at a trial as questionable as Jamal's should be overturned and a new trial held. Your kind suggestion that the state should not execute Jamal and should merely imprison him, one presumes for the rest of his life, seems inadequate.

It is true that Jamal's abilities as a writer have gotten his case much-needed attention, while hundreds, if not thousands, of prisoners whose trials had equal if not greater problems await their fate. But the goal should be to ensure that these prisoners get fair trials, not to deny Jamal his.

Also, the murder of Faulkner was a horrible crime, and I fail to understand why no one who has rushed forward to condemn Abu-Jamal while admitting to the problems of his trial seems to mind that if he is innocent, then a guilty cop-killer has gone unpunished.

SHELDON H. JAFFE
Seattle, Washington

True dichotomy

To the editors:

Stephen LaBonne and David Rowe (Correspondence, September 4) could hardly be in greater agreement with Richard Rorty, whom they consider themselves fiercely opposed to, because they have misunderstood what it is that he opposes. Acquiring "reliable knowledge" and "proven discoveries" is not in conflict with Rorty's pragmatism, unless interpreted as non-human-dependent, True with a capital "T" knowledge—a concept which non-philosophers are often fortunate enough never to have come into contact with.

DAVID SWANSON
Palmyra, Virginia

Statistical legerdemain

To the editors:

Beth Johnston's "Knotty Boys" (September 4) takes an overly benign view of regulatory agencies and their decision-making. The reality is that agencies make mistakes despite the existing checks on the regulatory process. These mistakes can cost millions of dollars, dampening investment, job creation and economic growth. More importantly, as courts have found in a handful of cases where judicial review was permitted, poor agency decisions can cost lives as well. In the case of *Corrosion Proof Fittings* v. *EPA*, for instance, a federal court found that the EPA banned certain specialty asbestos products, at tremendous cost, despite evidence that their likely replacements posed greater risks to public health. In *CEI* v. *NHTSA*, another federal court found that the federal agency relied upon "bureaucratic mumbo jumbo" and "statistical legerdemain" to deny the negative safety impact of its regulatory edict. Unless agencies know that a federal court may look over their shoulder, this blatant disregard for the potential impact of federal regulations is unlikely to be addressed.

It is certainly true, as Johnston notes, that the Clinton administration issued an Executive Order to require agencies to conduct various cost and risk analyses before promulgating major rules. However, a six-month review of the Environmental Protection Agency conducted by the Institute for Regulatory Policy found that few regulations issued by the agency meet the administration's review requirements. From April to September 1994,

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the EPA issued forty-five "significant" rules. In only six of the forty-five rules did the EPA make a determination that the benefits of the rule justified its costs. Moreover, in only nine cases did the EPA even consider whether less-burdensome or more cost-effective alternatives to the proposed rule existed. If a federal agency is unwilling to follow the requirements of an Executive Order, the need for further oversight should be clear.

JONATHAN H. ADLER
Environmental Studies director, CEI
Washington, D.C.

Coming to America

To the editors:

There is a name for what Peter Schuck and Julie Schuck ("Let Them In," September 4) suggest in regards to the Bosnian refugees: sanitized ethnic cleansing. The writers seemingly didn't consider that the 17,000 Bosnians that already came into the U.S. represent more than 1 percent of the total Bosnian Muslim population (of less than 2 million). Even the much larger arrivals of Asian refugees in the 1970s usually never amounted to more than 1 percent of the population of any particular nation. For example, although over half a million Vietnamese (of a population of 60 million) came to the United States, there never was even a remote possibility of the Vietnamese state being jeopardized because of excessive depopulation, as is the case with Bosnia.

The Serbs are the only ones benefiting from the current depopulation of Bosnia. Any possible peace plan hinges on the demographics of the area, and if most of the Bosnians are in the U.S. and elsewhere how can the remaining few expect to create a viable country? The writers also mention the 180,000 Bosnians living elsewhere in Europe. Being an immigrant myself, I am well aware of the psychological (and physical) difference of living "in Europe" and living in America or other overseas countries; almost no one ever goes back to the "old country" from America, but millions of refugees are constantly moving back and forth across Europe. Which means that the majority of those 180,000 will return to Bosnia if the war ever stops, but none of those from America will.

Yes, America should let Bosnians in, but only the orphans, widows, wounded and others incapable of taking care of themselves. The healthy Bosnians should be helped to stay in Bosnia (or at least in Europe) by improved economic aid and by stepped up political and military solutions to the conflict.

There is also the question of fairness toward people of other races who have suffered in wars similar to the one in Bosnia (Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan). If being from a nation at war should be the only criteria in being allowed into the U.S., then why aren't there hundreds of thousands of those ("other than white") people allowed to come also?

STJEPAN BALOG
Warren, Michigan

Mississippi blues

To the editors:

I was reading Michael Lind's review of Michael Kazin's *The Populist Persuasion* ("Power to the People," September 4) when I came across the name "Big Jim Folsom," which interested me greatly because I am related to "Big Jim Folsom." The thing is, "Big Jim Folsom" was governor of Alabama, not Mississippi.

Now, I happen to like Mississippi an awful lot, mind you. In fact, I recently—and reluctantly—moved to Washington, D.C., from Oxford, Mississippi. But my father, Max Folsom Morris, is from Alabama and remains convinced that Alabama is an earthly adumbration of paradise. He's been trying to lower his blood pressure for some time now, doctor's orders, but if he discovers Lind took Mr. Folsom out of Alabama, I fear all hope is lost.

SCOTT M. MORRIS
Washington, D.C.

"A truly extraordinary book"
—Prof. Charles F. Fraker, University of Michigan

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in Fifteenth Century Spain
B. Netanyahu

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RANDOM HOUSE

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FROM WASHINGTON

Some like it hot

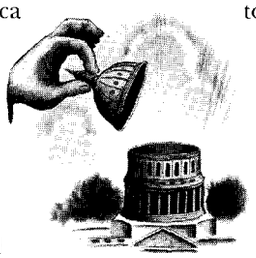
"[T]he EPA, the Gestapo of government, pure and simply, has been one of the major claw holds that the government has maintained on the backs of our constituents."
—Tom DeLay, House Majority Whip

Tom DeLay brings a special intensity to the Republican war against environmental regulation. Before entering politics he was an exterminator, and the Environmental Protection Agency's bothersome interest in pesticides seems to have left an impression. Still, he is hardly unique. A derisive hostility toward environmentalism is common among congressional Republicans. One thing that especially galls them is all this globaloney about the greenhouse effect and the thinning ozone layer. It combines namby-pamby liberal nature-loving with a namby-pamby liberal concern about matters beyond our borders. Representative Dana Rohrabacher—who, alarmingly, heads a subcommittee on energy and environment—has called standard theories of global climate change "unproven at best and liberal claptrap at worst."

That was in June. The intervening months have not been kind to Rohrabacher. The summers of 1992 and 1993, you may recall, were fairly cool; the greenhouse-fever stirred up by the sizzling 1980s began to subside, and some observers reverted to greenhouse skepticism. But not people who were paying attention. They knew that, shortly after the Mount Pinatubo eruption of 1991, greenhouse guru James Hansen had said the volcano's fallout would cool the planet for a few years; but, he predicted, warming would then resume. Sure enough, 1994 warmed the planet up, and this past summer brought heat waves that killed scores of Americans. Now 1995 is on track to become the world's hottest year since the 1850s, when good record-keeping began. And seven of the next eight hottest years were in the 1980s or 1990s. This summer also illustrated some of the feared corollaries of global warming: droughts and storms. Hurricanes have been so common that it's getting hard to distinguish between CNN and the Weather Channel.

Is the theory of global warming "unproven"? Yes, but so is everything else. Strictly speaking, science doesn't "prove" theories. It provides varying degrees of confidence in them, and in some cases (Copernican astronomy, say) the confidence is so high that "proof" isn't an appreciable exaggeration. The theory of global warming is now around the 99 percent confidence level. Indeed, a United Nations panel of 2,500 scientists just put out a report making it official: a mainstream consensus now says that the earth is heating up, due in part to the human creation of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Meanwhile, the World Meteorological Organization just reported that the ozone hole over Antarctica is growing at an "unprecedented" rate. And, with a confidence level also in the high nineties, we can attribute this largely to man-made chemicals, especially the chlorofluorocarbons being phased out under the Montreal Protocol of 1987. Also culpable, it seems, is methyl bromide, a widely used pesticide. Steady, Tom.



As I write, Republicans are counterattacking with congressional "hearings" on ozone depletion. Judging by the witness list, they will proceed as follows. First a few scientists will say that, yes, the ozone layer is thinning; yes, CFCs seem to be a primary cause; and, yes, the resulting intensity of ultraviolet rays will foster skin cancer and may kill oceanic phytoplankton, starving fish and cutting the world's food supply. These scientists will be from institutions you've heard of. Then a few scientists will express doubt about isolated portions of the preceding testimony. These scientists will be from places like the "Science and Environmental Policy Project," which during its five-year life has drawn financial support from Exxon, Shell, Arco and the Reverend Sun Myung Moon; or the "George C. Marshall Institute," which calls itself a "public policy research organization" but whose research has shown an unwavering tendency to either *(a)* cast doubt on standard theories of global climate change; or *(b)* document the urgency of building Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" missile defense.

After contemplating all this testimony, Republicans will declare that the jury is still out on ozone depletion, and further study is needed. Then they will get back to the workaday business of decimating government funding for further study. Initially, the plan was to—for example—kill the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and gut NASA's Mission to Planet Earth. Lately their chances of surviving in semi-recognizable form have risen, but the battle is hardly over. Meanwhile, the EPA's meager funds for fighting global warming and ozone depletion abroad—around $150 million—would be essentially wiped out by a Senate bill.

Also ominous are the grumpy noises Republicans make about the global environmental accords whose existence is a tribute to human rationality: the Montreal Protocol and the (somewhat laxer) Rio accord on global warming. One vintage Republican whine is that developed nations face a faster timetable of self-restraint than developing nations. Well, yes. The poor, as you may have heard, have short time horizons; they're too busy achieving sustenance to fret about the quality of life ten years from now. Besides, they're reluctant to forgo the cheap path to industrialization that we took. As a practical matter, our choice is between their falling into line in a few years and their never falling into line.

The Republican war on environmentalism isn't just stupid; it's stupid politics. Things like water pollution and ultraviolet rays have the properties that made the domestic Communist menace such a potent issue during the 1950s: they're invisible and a threat to your kids. The difference is that this time the threat is real. That fifty-one Republicans joined House Democrats to save core EPA functions in July suggests that some, at least, are getting the picture.

Republicans may have been misled by the "property rights" issue, their inaugural foray into anti-environmentalism. There they were defending industrialists, ranchers and other landowners against the EPA's supposedly capricious protection of endangered species and wetlands—two things the average American doesn't care about passionately. The average American *does* care about skin cancer. For that matter, even rich landowners change their tune on environmentalism when the focus turns to climate change. Ranchers don't like drought. And vacation-home owners aren't cheered by mainstream greenhouse predictions that most East Coast beaches will be gone in twenty-five years—not to mention large swaths of turf just inland. During the "property rights" crusade, Republicans got firm support from owners of wetlands. In the future, "wetlands" may have a different political meaning.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

OCTOBER 9, 1995

BIG DEAL

The "family cap"—which would deny poor mothers extra federal benefits if they have additional children while on welfare—matters a lot to Senator Phil Gramm. "That's the key issue," he declared, a few minutes before the Senate passed its version of welfare reform. The Senate bill doesn't have a family cap. The House bill does. Gramm vowed to vote against the final House-Senate compromise unless it includes the cap.

The family cap also matters to President Clinton. Before the Senate vote he denounced it as the work of "extremists" who would "punish children for the mistakes of their parents." After the vote he and other Democrats threatened a veto of any compromise bill that contains it. Meanwhile, the Christian Coalition says it plans a "grass-roots" phone and mail campaign to save the cap. The press, latching on to this confrontation, is to a great extent building its welfare coverage around the question: Will the final bill contain a family cap?

But the Great Family Cap Debate is almost entirely a fake. Were every state to impose a cap, it wouldn't be a major change. The cap, remember, does not alter the cash, Food Stamp and Medicaid benefits paid to a poor, single mother for the initial child that puts her on welfare. All it does is prevent her from collecting a bit extra (about $50-60 a month, typically) if she has *another* child while on welfare. Such second, third and fourth children comprise only about a fifth of the children on welfare. Even the cap's defenders don't claim it has produced any more than a 10 percent reduction in births to women on welfare in the first state (New Jersey) where it's been tried.

The current debate isn't even over whether states can institute this modest reform. Under the "moderate" Senate bill, embraced by Clinton, they are free to do so. The bill turns welfare into a "block grant" program, sending the states a fixed sum of federal money to spend on whatever welfare programs they devise. A state could decide to offer no cash welfare at all. It could certainly institute a family cap. Nor does the "extreme" House cap *require* states to deny the extra benefits, as long as they finance those benefits using their "own" money, rather than the federal block grant. "It's a nothing provision," admits one GOP congressional aide.

So why all the fuss? In part because there is something in the cap issue for everyone. The Christian Coalition gets a fund-raising cause. Gramm gets the ready-made accusation that the Senate bill, crafted by his presidential rival, Bob Dole, "does not have a provision dealing with illegitimacy," which conservatives plausibly identify as a "root cause" of the welfare mess. Clinton gets an issue on which to stand up to the right, even as he accepts a radically conservative welfare bill.

And everybody gets to ignore the bill's central contradiction, which concerns the far more crucial issue of whether the single mothers who make up the bulk of adult welfare recipients will have to work. Both the House and Senate bills nominally require half the welfare caseload to be working sometime after the turn of the century. Despite what Gramm says, this *is* a "provision dealing with illegitimacy"—a more effective provision than a family cap. (Which, after all, is more likely to deter you from having the out-of-wedlock baby that puts you on welfare—the prospect of losing a sixth of your benefits in the event that you have a second child, or the prospect of having to work for *all* your benefits now?)

The problem is that getting single mothers to work requires money for child care and administrators—but the Republican bills don't provide it. White House aides, defending the president's willingness to sign Dole's welfare bill, suggest that Senate Democrats resolved this contradiction when they won $3 billion in extra child care money. But according to our estimate (using numbers from the Congressional Budget Office) the Senate bill still falls at least $7 billion short over the next five years, and the shortfall gets worse after that.

It's not enough, then, for President Clinton and the Democrats to hold the line against any retreat from the funding in the Senate bill. To make the welfare reform bill work, which means making its work requirements work, they need to add still more money. How could that possibly be accomplished? If only there were something—some little amendment or pet clause—that the Republicans desperately wanted. Hmmmm. Mr. Gramm? Mr. Gingrich? You say this "family cap" proposal is vitally important? Well, all right. You can have it. But it will cost you. Does $7 billion seem like a fair price? •

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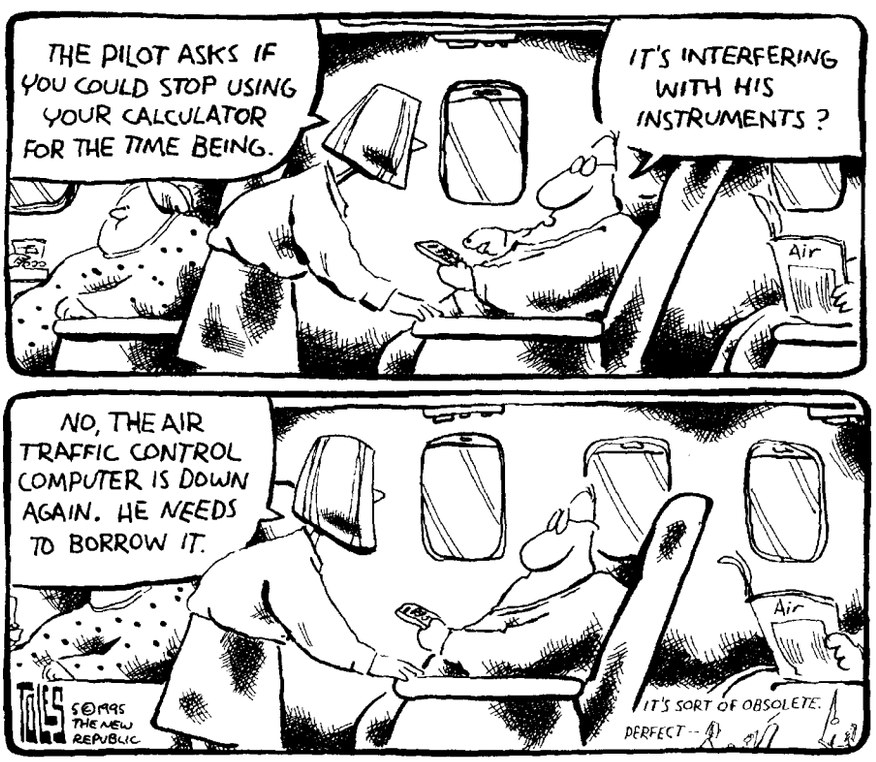
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: A New York man's HMO insisted he undergo castration as a "cost-effective" alternative to his prostate cancer treatment.... The Miss America Pageant received approximately 750,000 50-cent toll calls in favor of continuing its swimsuit competition.... A court hearing to decide the fate of Jeffrey Dahmer's brain has been set for October 3.... A 17-year-old Moore, Oklahoma, boy was arrested for cleaning his car's dipstick with an American flag.... Former President George Bush spoke in Japan as the guest of Unification Church leader Reverend Sun Myung Moon's wife, who claimed her husband was "instrumental in bringing about the collapse of communism." ... A Kenton County, Kentucky, prosecutor jailed a woman whose son owed a $3 library fine.... Shortly before her resignation, California State Assembly Speaker Doris Allen attacked her critics as "power-mongering men with short penises." ... Jimmy Carter's forthcoming book will be titled *The Little Baby Snoogle-Fleejer.*


THE PILOT ASKS IF YOU COULD STOP USING YOUR CALCULATOR FOR THE TIME BEING.
IT'S INTERFERING WITH HIS INSTRUMENTS ?
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Air
IT'S SORT OF OBSOLETE.
PERFECT --
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BETCHA: Richard Lugar has raised an interesting issue in the presidential campaign: the proliferation of gambling across the country. What was once the province of Las Vegas and Atlantic City has spread exponentially as states, ever eager to compete for tax revenue and tourist dollars, allow a variety of games. Craps on Illinois riverboats, roulette on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, baccarat in Connecticut. There are twin objections to all this. One is aesthetic. Do we want every corner of America to become Potterville, the sinister betting town of *It's a Wonderful Life?* More ominous is the flock of social ills—from crime to immiseration of the poorest—that accompanies gambling. However opportunistic, Lugar is right to speak out on the issue. But it would be better to hear from the president. His hometown of Hot Springs, Arkansas, was a mob-infested gambling mecca when Bill Clinton grew up; today, the casinos have been expelled. Clinton could speak to the improvement with the conviction of experience. Betcha he won't.

THE END OF RACISM: Two weeks ago, ultraconservative Senator Jesse Helms was the featured guest on CNN's "Larry King Live." With King away, the show was guest hosted—presumably for ideological balance—by the merely conservative Robert Novak, who at one point took a call from Tilk, Alabama. "Mr. Helms, I know this might not be politically correct to say these days," the caller from Alabama gushed, "but I just think that you should get a Nobel Peace Prize for everything you've done to keep down the niggers." (*Time,* which excerpted the transcript, missed Helms's odd reply: "Thank you, I think.") After some embarrassed chuckles from Helms and Novak, the conversation continued: "That was the bad word," said Novak. "That was politically incorrect. Can you—we really don't condone that kind of language, though, do we?" Helms concurred and then pointed out that "Mark Twain used it." Yes, but Twain was conveying rather different sentiments. And neither Helms nor Novak took the slightest exception to the caller's sentiments—only to the "politically incorrect" language in which he expressed them. Apparently, if the gentleman from Tilk wishes to avoid a rebuke the next time he calls, he should make sure to thank Helms for keeping down the African Americans.

BOOM! Advice for slightly nutty, deeply reactionary, occasionally murderous freelance writers: blackmail the owners of the two largest newspapers in America and set a deadline. Soon you will see your rantings published in a special eight-page supplement to one of the nation's leading newspapers. Or so the terrorist known as the Unabomber, and those who no doubt will follow him, can conclude. The decision by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to publish the Unabomber's mani-

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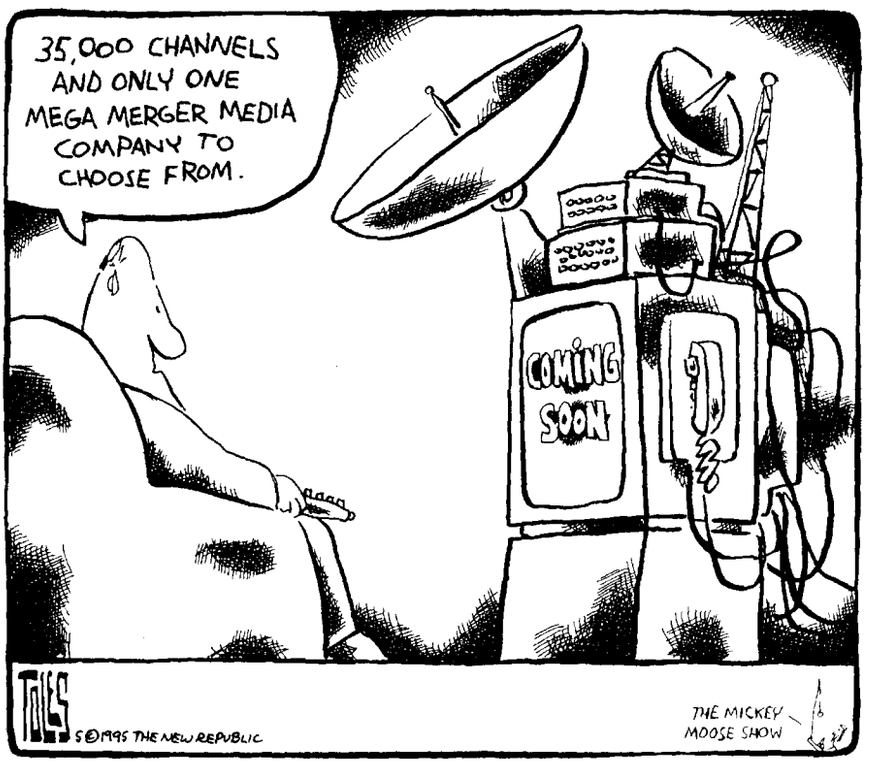
festo is an ill-advised cave-in to terrorism. It sets the worst kind of precedent, inviting any spurned madman to kill for column inches. "You print it and he doesn't kill anyone else," the *Times*'s Arthur Ochs Sulzberger says, defending the decision. A noble sentiment, perhaps, but how do we know the Unabomber will keep his end of the bargain? You can't be sure he'll kill again, and you can't be sure he'll keep his promise not to. Why trust the word of a man who has killed three people and injured twenty-three others? After all, his demands don't stop with this manifesto. He also insists on space for a series of 3,000-word pieces over the next three years in order to rebut his critics. One can understand and sympathize with the dilemma that Sulzberger and Donald Graham of the *Post* faced. What is far harder to understand or sympathize with is the sentimentalization of the Unabomber's acts and ideas that some Leftoids have fallen into. Kirkpatrick Sale took this tendency to absurd heights in the September 25 issue of *The Nation,* in which he argued for publishing the tract: "[T]he central point the Unabomber is trying to make ... is absolutely crucial for the American public to understand and ought to be on the forefront of the nation's political agenda...." Embracing the Unabomber as an ally of the left and a prophet for our troubled times, Sale conveniently ignored his crotchety conservatism. The Unabomber, we can be quite sure, is not an avid *Nation* reader. "The terms 'negro,' 'Oriental,' 'handicapped' or 'chick' ... originally had no derogatory connotations," he maintians in one of his many attacks on "oversocialized" leftists. "The leftist," he continues, "is antagonistic to the concept of competition because, deep inside, he feels like a loser." Some losers, clearly, are better left unpublished.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THE MICKEY MOOSE SHOW

REMEMBERING FRED: On September 19, the Carnegie Endowment for Peace in Washington convened an affecting memorial service for the remarkable Fred Cuny, who was killed in Chechnya under circumstances that have not yet been clarified. Friends and colleagues rose to remember Cuny's pioneering achievements in disaster relief around the world, the extraordinary mixture of practicality and idealism that made him one of the first heroes of the post-cold-war world, in which genocides large and small have become the most pressing order of international business. They told stories about Somalia and Rwanda and Bosnia, especially about Sarajevo, where Cuny devised a new system for the supply of water and gas for the people under siege. And there, in the middle of this melancholy celebration of action and intervention, sat Anthony Lake, the same Anthony Lake who has mishandled all the circumstances of atrocity in which Fred Cuny risked his life and finally lost his life. No doubt Lake had come to honor Cuny as a great humanitarian; but speaking about humanitarianism has always been Lake and company's way of speaking about disasters without speaking about them politically, that is, as adversities that the United States could have prevented, stopped or substantially alleviated. The capital is a shameless place.

FLYING THE FRIENDLY SKIES: Something amazing, even by Middle Eastern standards, happened in the Middle East last week. An Iranian airline employee who was "sick of being in Iran" hijacked an Iranian plane and demanded that it land in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis refused. Then he demanded that it land in Jordan. The Jordanians refused. And so the flight from Iran landed ... in Israel. "We have to make a crash landing because of low fuel," the pilot told Israel ground controllers, and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, as he later told reporters, was "convinced that we should not have allowed a passenger plane to crash, even if it was an Iranian plane." The Iranian passengers were given lunch and soft drinks. The gentleman who was sick of being in Iran was given asylum. There was decency in the desert, and it was not a mirage. Meanwhile, back in Teheran, Iranian television thundered that it was preparing "all kinds of means to rescue the passengers." A real rescue of these people, of course, would let them stay just where, inadvertently, they are. •

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The war in Chechnya "ends."

TEA AND SYMPATHY

By Masha Gessen

During the war in Chechnya's first weeks, before I left Moscow to go cover it, I went to see Larisa Bogoraz, a matriarch of the dissident movement, a tiny old woman who has miraculously survived prison, labor camps, exile. She sat on the couch, rocking back and forth, looking at the live television coverage of shells exploding in Grozny. "Bring back testimony," she told me. "For when there is a trial. I so hope there is a trial."

There was a trial. On July 31, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, the country's highest judicial body, ruled that the president's decrees leading to the war in Chechnya did not violate the Constitution. It was the same day that the seven-month war itself came officially to a close, some 30,000 lives later. On that day, the government published the first treaty signed by Russian and Chechen negotiators. Both sides would begin to lay down arms and exchange prisoners. Though the fighting continues, though Chechnya's political status is no longer clear to anyone, and though the authority of the Chechen signatories is highly questionable, state television announced that the never-declared war had ended.

On that day, also, the government released its long-awaited, much-demanded casualty statistics. According to the officials, 1,867 Russian troops have died; 6,481 are wounded; and 252 are missing in action. More than 8,000 Chechen fighters are dead. The minister of internal affairs said no one has tallied the civilian losses.

Actually, one man did count more than 25,000 of them. Sergei Kovaliov, another veteran of Soviet labor camps, started counting during the first days of the war, in his capacity as Russia's human rights commissioner. Last March the Parliament fired Kovaliov, who had risked his life to document the government's violations of the Geneva Convention: its destruction of Chechnya's civilian infrastructure and its use of needle and cassette bombs against non-combatants. And on that day, July 31, President Yeltsin signed a decree abolishing the Human Rights Commission altogether.

And, of course, there was that trial. In its first case since the Constitution was adopted in December 1993, the Court had been asked to consider three presidential decrees and one government resolution. The first decree, signed in 1993, provided for the use of armed forces in resolving internal conflicts. The Court found it to be outside its jurisdiction. The second decree, classified and never officially released to the public, was signed November 30 and set the date for the start of armed intervention. The Court set this decree aside because, it said, it had been supplanted by the next decree. The next decree, signed December 9—two days before the war—directed the government to use all available state resources to "restore constitutional order" in the breakaway republic. The Court found this decree constitutional as well, noting that it could consider only the document, not its consequences.

Finally, the Court ruled unconstitutional two aspects of the government resolution that carried out the president's decree. One prescribed the summary eviction from Chechnya of all persons guilty of legal infractions. The other gave officials sweeping powers to revoke the accreditation of journalists working in the region. (In point of fact, government forces did not heed either provision exactly; they just shot at both groups.)

The Court's rulings marked a decisive victory for President Yeltsin, whose representatives exited the courtroom triumphant and lingered to make victory speeches. The head of the president's administration, Sergei Filatov, even claimed that the ruling would ensure Yeltsin's victory in the upcoming elections. He must not have checked the president's approval rating, which has held steady at under 10 percent since the beginning of the war.

Speaking at a press conference, the Court's chairman, Vladimir Tumanov, acknowledged that it was "not nice to shoot at people" but repeated that the manner in which decrees are carried out is not a matter for the Constitutional Court. Tumanov held his press conference the day after the ruling because immediately after reading the decision he was busy taking tea in his chambers with Filatov.

Tumanov's deputy, Tamara Morshakova, did hold a press conference on the day of the ruling, however. In exquisite legalese she explained the difficulties of the Court's first case. "If I were not a Constitutional judge, I would have had to take into consideration the amount of tears on both sides," Morshakova confessed. She suggested that other courts take up the tears issue, though she acknowledged that any aggrieved Chechen bringing a case would face an uphill battle.

She also suggested that the government compensate war victims through "special financing or special investments in Chechnya." On that day, July 31, the government released its budget for 1996. It pegged the federal subsidy to Chechnya at the same ruble amount—or about half as much in hard currency—as last year.

On the day the war in Chechnya officially ended, the testimony I brought back sat on my desk. I got it from a Chechen boy who found it in his yard. It is one and a half inches in diameter, about five inches long and made of lead. It is the sort of bullet fired from machine guns mounted on armored vehicles. It is the smallest thing the federal troops used against the civilian population of Chechnya, and it makes an excellent paperweight.

MASHA GESSEN writes for *Sevodnia* (*Today*), a daily newspaper in Moscow.

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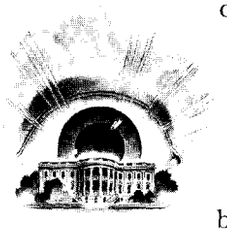
WHAT'S MY LINE?

By Matthew Cooper

The line-item veto is one of those ideas that everyone seems to support. The measure, which, in varying degrees, would allow the president to zap part of a bill rather than the whole thing, is one of the few clauses in the House GOP's Contract with America that is also in Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign document "Putting People First." But far from being a Washington success story, the line-item veto, as it has unfurled over the past year, is an exercise in hypocrisy and humor.

First, the hypocrisy part. The GOP Congress, which nearly to a member touted the line-item veto as proof of its commitment to fiscal austerity, has yet to pass it. With a burst of self-congratulation, Gingrich's House delivered a version in February. Republican after Republican raced to the well of the House to proclaim the bill as a "birthday present" to Ronald Reagan who, when he wasn't proposing deficit-exploding budgets, used to ask for the line-item veto to halt deficit-exploding budgets. After the House won one for the Gipper, the Senate followed with its own version. Then it sat. Gingrich himself intimated that the line-item veto might not pass this year. Finally, this summer the GOP leadership was pressured into forming a conference to reconcile the two measures. And that is where the line-item veto stands, or rather, languishes, this fall. Chances that the bill will pass are still good, but only after the heavy lifting is done on this year's budget—far too late for it to be wielded.



Why the delay? The reason is as obvious as it is nefarious. When it comes down to it, Republican leaders want the president to have the line-item veto—they just don't want *this* president to have it. Senator John McCain, an Arizona Republican and one of the line-item veto's staunchest defenders, makes the point: "I think it became clear some months ago that the Republicans don't want to give this power to the president." McCain adds: "I'm feeling cynical."

"Frustrated" better describes the feeling in the Oval Office. The president, like Reagan before him, continues to demand a line-item veto of his very own. He privately asks aides: "What is the deal? When am I going to get to sign it?" The White House, says McCain, has been "very smart. They keep saying, 'Give me the bill.' " That's what happens at administration meetings with the congressional leadership, like the one in September at the White House where the president dutifully raised the issue. The response from House Majority Leader Dick Armey was perfunctory: We're working on it. The discussion moved on.

But what if the bill itself moves on? What difference would a line-item veto actually make? House Republicans like Toby Roth of Wisconsin have called the line-item veto "an invaluable instrument in the arsenal to cut government spending." But the evidence that the bill would be helpful, let alone invaluable, seems at best dubious. The handful of studies that have been done on the subject, and reviewed by *Congressional Quarterly*'s Andrew Taylor, find that the line-item veto power, which is retained by forty-three governors, has had only modest effects on spending. An examination by University of Wisconsin political scientist James Gosling revealed that line-item vetoes produced budget cuts that amounted to a mere .006 to 2.5 percent of Wisconsin's budget—and that is with a line-item veto authority that's stronger than anything Congress is proposing. The state's GOP governor, Tommy Thompson, has, for instance, been able to use it more than 1,500 times to strike individual words, not just lines. More often, the veto is used in high-profile cases. Last year in Florida, Democratic Governor Lawton Chiles vetoed a $500,000 mosquito research program after the state watchdog group, Florida TaxWatch, made a stink about it. But this is petty pork-barrel spending, not the big-ticket items that dominate a budget, state or federal. It would be nice if the proponents of the measure were as honest as Senator Mike DeWine, an Ohio Republican who supports the line-item veto but concedes that it is not "a magic wand."

It might also be an unconstitutional wand. Republicans who fancy themselves strict constructionists should be the first ones to observe the stricture of Article I, Section 7: Congress passes bills and the president vetoes them. It doesn't say "part of a bill" or "individual lines of a bill"; it says "a bill." In the states where governors have the line-item veto, there is no such injunction. The line-item veto is expressly written into their state constitution. For the feds, "the only proper way to have a line-item veto is with a constitutional amendment," says Columbia Law Professor Richard Briffault, who has studied the legal ramifications of the issue. The Supreme Court may well agree. The Court, which has been reluctant to meddle in congressional affairs, could well eliminate a line-item veto just as it did in 1983 when it killed the so-called legislative veto.

To prevent such a crib death, congressional leaders have crafted bills to pass judicial muster—in ways that are both devious and amusing. The Senate bill, for instance, would empower congressional bureaucrats to take each bill that comes out of the Congress and chop it up into little bills. Just one problem. They would have the discretion of whether to send, say, The Widget Protection Act of 1995 to the president as paragraphs or sentences. This is a potentially crucial difference, depending on where the president wants to cut. Sud-

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denly the unelected Secretary of the Senate and the House Clerk are Beltway players, the subject of debate on "The McLaughlin Group," but as insulated from accountability as Alan Greenspan or Antonin Scalia.

Still, for all its faults, the line-item veto is worth passing, if only for the delicious opportunity to call the bluff of those who imply that the deficit is caused by pork and not by items like Medicare and the Pentagon. The items that might get nixed by a line-item veto are "chump change," says ex-Congressional Budget Office boss Robert Reischauer. Passage might even foster an appreciation for pork; it is, after all, the lubricant of politics whether it's in the crass form of highway projects and political appointments or the more tasteful guise of obscure regulations. To try and sanitize the politics of spoils is a doomed struggle. So, pass the line-item veto, but also pass on respect to those eccentrics and cranks who fought it—such as Senator Robert Byrd, the jurassic Democrat from West Virginia who has battled the line-item veto with quivering anger; and Helen Chenoweth, the militia sympathizer from Idaho, who was one of only four House Republicans to vote against it. They seem to understand Washington's injunction, The Pork Shall Always be With Ye, even if Gingrich and Clinton do not. •

The Republican Medicare plan.

BEEN THERE, DONE IT

By Michael Kinsley

The Republican Medicare reform plan, unveiled by Speaker Gingrich on September 14, is miraculous. It would squeeze $270 billion out of the program over seven years by raising premiums barely a pinprick for most people; and by allowing participants to keep the exact same benefits they have now or to choose new options that would be even better. It's the most important medical advance since the discovery that ice-cream sundaes cure cancer.

But, wonderful as the Republican plan may be, certain elements of it seem eerily familiar. They bear a striking similarity to features of President Clinton's ill-fated health care reform plan—features that were heavily reviled, fairly or otherwise, by Republicans. Now these supposedly terrible drawbacks of the Clinton plan have been repackaged as swell advantages of the Republican scheme.

There is one obvious difference between last year's Clinton plan and this year's Republican plan. Clinton's proposal, as released, was, famously, over 1,300 pages long, whereas the Republican proposal weighs in at a mere four pages (plus five additional pages of Q&A). Critics made much of the Clinton plan's bulk. It was held to prove the intrusive, bureaucratic nature of the proposal. The point was idiotic. Whatever the merits of the Clinton proposal, *any* serious reform of the health care system would take hundreds of pages to describe in detail. A serious, honest reform proposal for Medicare alone would need to be almost as long. The initial Republican proposal is as short as it is because it leaves out all the difficult bits—not to save paper, but to save skeptical scrutiny. When you're promising miracles, it's better to describe them in general than in detail.

In last year's health care debate, a tremendous fuss was made over the fact that Hillary Clinton's health care task force met "in secret" to produce the plan eventually presented to the public. There were even lawsuits (unsuccessful) to prevent the private confabs. This "secret meetings" stuff was a big part of the culture war against Mrs. Clinton, casting her as the diabolical mastermind of the administration's nefarious left-wing agenda.

Well, were you invited to the meetings where Gingrich and company cooked up their Medicare reform? I wasn't. To be sure, Republican politicians held some public forums, but so did Hillary. More to the point, the Clinton plan was ultimately offered in extensive—indeed, politically excessive—detail, and then debated publicly for close to a year. The Republicans are offering a pig in a poke, and they plan to have it voted on and sent to President Clinton in barely a month.

The most amazing similarity between this year's Republican plan and last year's Clinton plan is their shared reliance on managed care to achieve the hoped-for savings. Managed care was the most vilified aspect of the Clinton scheme. "No Exit," Elizabeth McCaughey's celebrated, influential, inaccurate and unfair dissection of the Clinton plan in these pages (TNR, February 7, 1994)—it helped get her nominated and elected as the Republican lieutenant governor of New York—was mostly a tirade on the awfulness of health maintenance organizations.

What a difference a year makes! HMOs and other managed care arrangements are now presented as so splendid that the elderly will choose to join them by the millions, thus painlessly saving the government billions. In the House version of Medicare reform, managed care is presumed to be so wonderful that seniors will opt for it without any financial incentive. In the Senate version—as in Clinton's plan—the system would be slanted to encourage people to choose the managed care option. Last year this was called "railroading"; this year it is called "freedom of choice." Last year, managed care was caricatured as socialized medicine; this year, it is portrayed as free-market capitalism at its finest.

What makes this flexible Republican Party line especially Orwellian is that Medicare beneficiaries are among the last people in the country who still have freedom of choice when it comes to doctors and hospitals. Last year's health care debate mainly concerned

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

What the Public Wants

This year's Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, "The Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," gives policymakers a clear picture of what Americans want. The results are consistent with "First Things First," a survey by the Public Agenda Foundation that I have commented on in previous columns. The public continues to call for commonsense steps to improve the schools.

On top of the list of school problems that concern the public is lack of discipline in the schools. The blame for this is placed on parents' failure to control, supervise, and discipline their children. But the public does not want schools to simply stand by. If a student is guilty of continually disruptive behavior, 20 percent want the student expelled while 77 percent want the student transferred to a separate facility to get special attention. If the student is "guilty of violence against another student or teacher," 31 percent favor expulsion and 66 percent transfer to a separate facility.

The public continues to call for commonsense steps to improve the schools.

The public strongly favors higher academic standards and wants a get-tough policy here, too. By 87 percent to 10 percent, the public thinks students should have to meet "higher standards than are now required in math, English, history, and science in order to graduate from high school." Asked whether they think that higher standards would "encourage students from poor backgrounds to do better in school, or...cause them to be discouraged or to drop out," the public believes (60 percent to 29 percent) that students would do better. Asked if they would favor higher standards for graduation even if it meant that fewer students would make it, they said "yes" by 65 percent to 29 percent. The public doesn't just want higher standards in high school. By 78 percent to 20 percent, they favor setting standards "for what students [in grades K-3] should know and be able to do."

Congress should pay attention. The public wants less federal influence on schools (64 percent to 28 percent), more state influence (52 percent to 37 percent), and more local government influence (64 percent to 24 percent). But, in order to make sure standards are maintained, the public favors "requiring students in the public schools of [their] community to pass standardized, national examinations for promotion from grade to grade" (65 percent to 32 percent). Also, while the courts and some in the Clinton administration have been pushing to put students with "learning problems" in the same classes with other students, rather than special classes, the public supports special classes (66 percent to 26 percent).

With the big Republican sweep last November, many people assumed there was large-scale support for private school vouchers. Not so. The public favors allowing parents to choose among *public* schools (69 percent to 28 percent) but opposes "allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense" (65 percent to 33 percent). Roman Catholics oppose private school choice at public expense (54 percent to 44 percent), as do parents of children in non-public schools (51 percent to 44 percent). Private schools should take heed: The public believes that if private schools "accept government tuition payments for...students [they] should be accountable to public authorities" (73 percent to 24 percent).

Some liberals may be tempted to oppose the get-tough attitude about discipline and academic standards because they believe it reflects a right-wing shift that needs to be resisted rather than accommodated. They could cite the public's support for a constitutional amendment "that would permit spoken prayers in the public schools (71 percent to 26 percent)." But further examination would reveal anything but a hard-line, right-wing ideology. Seventy percent prefer a moment of silence or silent prayer; only 24 percent favor spoken prayer. If spoken prayers were permitted, only 13 percent would want them to reflect "Christian beliefs and values," while 81 percent say they should "reflect all major religions." More specifically, by a 73 percent to 20 percent majority, the public would want spoken Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu prayers by students of these faiths, in addition to Christian prayers.

There are some pretty clear messages here. Parents and the public strongly support public education. But they want schools where students are expected to behave and meet high standards in academic subjects—and school employees feel the same way. They're right, too. All the evidence tells us that high standards for behavior and achievement get results.

It's time to give the people who have a real stake in public education what they want—and what works. That's why the AFT is conducting a nationwide campaign on standards of conduct and standards for achievement: "Responsibility, Respect, Results: Lessons for Life." Responsible politicians ought to propose this as an Education Contract with America and deliver.

The 1995 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll appears in the September 1995 issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan*.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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working Americans and their families, most of whom are already in managed care plans, which limit free choice. Many of us (NEW REPUBLIC employees, for example) don't even have a choice about whether to join managed care in the first place, since that is all our employers offer. Clinton's plan would have expanded, not contracted, our options. Medicare, by contrast, is old-fashioned, free-choice, fee-for-service insurance. So seniors really will be giving up "choice" if they opt for managed care, either voluntarily or with varying degrees of encouragement.

One might well argue—indeed, I do argue—that there is no logical reason why Medicare beneficiaries should continue to enjoy the kind of complete freedom of choice that is beyond the reach of most other Americans. Indeed, one might even argue (which I don't) that since Medicare is essentially a government welfare program it should be somewhat *less* lavish than the health care arrangements people pay for themselves. That would be a serious argument. But I don't think we'll hear any Republican make it.

Then there's the matter of "price controls." Clinton's plan aspired to control health care costs through market discipline, but it had a fail-safe device involving a ceiling on insurance premiums if cost-control targets weren't met. Republican critics argued, with justice, that this amounted to a "cap" on health care spending which could only be realized through government price controls, with their attendant bureaucracies and inefficiencies.

Yet the House Republican Medicare reform contains a similar fail-safe device. Indeed, the Republican price controls are direct, not merely indirect. The plan provides that if its voluntary, market-oriented, free-choice reforms fail to hold Medicare spending below set targets, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall arbitrarily reduce payments to doctors and hospitals to save the appropriate amount. And since, in the House version at least, the Republican plan does nothing even to encourage Medicare beneficiaries to abandon their current expensive arrangements, the Republican plan is much more likely than President Clinton's was to lead to those "fail-safe" price controls. If Republicans have solved the age-old problem of making price controls work, it is a solution they fail to find room for in the four pages of their plan.

One more small example. Last year, the Republicans tarred various elements of President Clinton's health care reform plan as "tax increases." This year, the increases they propose in Medicare premiums are being labeled a "reduction in subsidy." Fair enough: the premiums don't begin to cover the cost of the insurance they provide. But will the Republicans apply that same logic to, say, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's attempts to charge more realistic fees for grazing and mineral rights on government land—a multi-billion-dollar annual subsidy to some very rich people and companies? Of course not. As the late Malcolm Baldridge, Commerce Secretary under Ronald Reagan, once explained: "If it is a Democratic proposal, it is a tax; if it is Republican, it is a user fee."

To be sure, some Democrats have also changed their tune since last year. House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt complained the other day that the Republicans were "forcing seniors to give up the doctors they have known for decades" and "crowding out the kinds of quality care and cutting-edge medical research that save lives." As with last year's virtually identical Republican rhetoric about the Clinton plan, talk like this is partly untrue, partly exaggerated and partly a backhanded acknowledgment of the reality that *any* effort to restrain health care costs will involve painful readjustments. Medical research, for example, has been subsidized in part by the inefficiencies of the health care financing system. Eliminate the inefficiencies, either through the market or by government fiat, and you eliminate the subsidy.

The point is not that the Republicans' proposed Medicare reform is a bad thing. Much of it is good and necessary, though it is being presented dishonestly. The point is that the Republicans owe President Clinton—and Mrs. Clinton—an apology for much of what they said about health care reform last year. •

An open letter to ex-Professor Newt.

GREEK TO HIM

By Peter Green

Dear Dr. Gingrich:

Forgive the slightly formal mode of address. I know all the best people nowadays—phone salesmen, talk-show hosts, politicians—prefer a mode of instant intimacy, but I still find it hard to make bosom buddies out of people I don't know. There is also the matter of academic courtesy. You were once a professor. I still am. This is, in a manner of speaking, an academic letter. According to an article in *The New York Times*, you were inspired in your youth by Arnold Toynbee and Isaac Asimov but have as your "guide du jour" my study of the Hellenistic Age, *Alexander to Actium*. "And so you look at America," you're quoted as asserting, "and you say, domestically we are running a real risk of the Greek problem of decaying from real citizenship into a passive bread and circus model, and you say in terms of the world order, how is it we should function?" My first reaction to your reading of my work was—excuse me?

Not that I am the first scholar whose work you have interpreted in creative ways. Though the *Times* did not make clear which Toynbee and Asimov selections you

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admired, I felt pretty sure that you hadn't sought guidance from Toynbee's investigations of Hannibal or Asimov's less-than-familial limericks. The two works that these pundits had, very loosely, in common were Toynbee's massive ten-volume *A Study of History* and Asimov's early science-fiction Foundation trilogy, both of which went in for Spenglerian doom-and-gloom prophecies about the decline of the West. In your book *To Renew America* you told us that *A Study of History* convinced you that "failure to respond effectively could mean the end of your civilization in a remarkably short period of time," not an exactly earthshaking realization; for his part, Asimov sharpened your taste for psycho-history and predictions of mass behavior.

I find it odd that anyone who spent time as a professional historian should have been so dazzled by Toynbee, whose historical tendentiousness academic critics such as Pieter Geyl and Hugh Trevor-Roper demolished with lethal zest and whose philosophy was one of theological and defeatist obscurantism. As Trevor-Roper wrote, "Toynbee detests Western civilisation because it is basically liberal and rational." Was it this animosity, perhaps, that caught your youthful fancy? After all, many a good young historian has been betrayed by unacknowledged (and often unconscious) gut prejudices, and to judge by your 1971 Tulane dissertation, on Belgian education policy in the Congo between 1945 and 1960, you were as good as they come.

Those who have grown used to your recent corncob style would be astonished to find you, in dissertation mode, presenting conclusions based on exhaustive bilingual research in the Belgian archives (Sir Roger Casement's famous report is cited only in its French translation: *très chic, ça*) and writing them up in elegant prose.

They would be all the more astonished by the substance of some of those conclusions. "Belgian colonialism was in fact a model of technocratic government," you start off, but any expectation of whitewash is premature. Economically, you are in J.K. Galbraith country: capital investment comes off second to education, which you promote as a prime priority. You are as outraged as anyone by Leopold's Congo policies and offer penetrating analysis of the special-interests triumvirate—big business, the Church, government bureaucracy—that continued to run the Congo for its own benefit even after Leopold's personal fiefdom was dissolved. Your conclusion, you will recall, is that in the Congo, "The dream of technocratic planning had all too many hidden limitations and so became a nightmare."

Now I don't find any difficulty in relating the boy with a passion for Toynbee's puritanical pessimism to your emotional rant today about the right to bear arms, getting big government off our backs and the rest of it. But I do wonder how to square this persona with that of the idealistic young scholar who wrote your dissertation. And despite the free publicity you've given my book, I have to ask myself how, as a historian, you can get its message so wrong.

What you were after, clearly, was a model, an awful warning, to stimulate civic involvement (in itself an excellent thing). This participation, you seem to imagine, would render leftist-style government interventions unnecessary. You saw that I drew disquieting parallels between the Hellenistic Age and our own, that I talked about political impotence in the individual and authoritarianism in government, and figured you had a new-style *Decline of the West* on your hands. But you completely missed the real lesson behind these parallels.

It didn't worry you that some of the most prominent symptoms of this decline emanate from your own neck of the political woods—religious fundamentalism, science perverted for military ends and "systematic extortion in pursuit of the plutocratic dream" (we all know who the chief beneficiaries of a flat income tax would be). Whoever the villains of the Hellenistic Age may have been, they were certainly not die-hard liberal democrats determined to subject the populace to ruinously expensive welfare schemes.

Like too many Americans, I suspect—this is the old unregenerate European in me speaking—that despite your historical training you find it almost impossible to conceive that degree of stony, callous indifference to human suffering that characterized ancient society. The world I investigated in *Alexander to Actium* had no insurance, anesthetics or official public welfare. Children were regularly put out to die in the woods; stability, not growth, was the ideal; and no one had any real notion of reinvestment. Small resemblance to the modern world there, and we can count our blessings. Business activities, on the other hand, went unregulated to a degree that makes modern free enterprise look positively dirigiste by comparison. The price-gouging carried out by the grain-merchants' cartels of the ancient world has an uncomfortably modern air about it and, in a world where the bearing of arms was taken for granted, prompted a sequence of virtually nonstop wars. Rulers used such conflicts to good effect, since booty provided a popular way to raise revenue.

You suppose that because many Hellenistic individuals felt powerless, their dilemma must have mirrored that of your theoretical American citizen complaining, amid the cushioned horrors of Social Security, Medicare, etc., that true civic involvement is almost lost, that the interference and wastefulness of central government is taking all upright decent folk (i.e., rich and successful conservatives) to hell in the proverbial handbasket. In fact the only real resemblance is that rulers in the Hellenistic period were even less concerned with the plight of the poor and homeless than you are today. Whether under Ptolemaic control or in an independent city-state, the survival of the fittest was no metaphor, but the ugly and literal truth.

Never mind that bread-and-circuses was a Roman concept, or that the only time when anyone in power gave a damn about the populace was when it threat-

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ened to riot: I find myself wondering just how, in detail, you draw the parallel between the citizen body of the USA, probably the most physically and politically pampered group in all world history, and those who were either vigorously exploited by corrupt officials in outlying provinces or ground up in what Louis MacNeice once called "the eternal faction and reaction of the city-state." They had something real to complain about, and precious little prospect of redress. I suspect that when you talk about "reforming the great bureaucracies" you vaguely equate conditions in Ptolemaic Alexandria with the problems of Washington, D.C. Not so, my friend. Human life in the third century B.C. was nasty, brutish and short in a way that would have made even Hobbes blink. It embodied the natural consequence of that pure laissez-faireism which seems one of your most cherished dreams.

Let me end on an ironic note. You've come a long way since your days as a young Tulane doctoral candidate, when you understood the paramount importance of backing educational development. Indeed, your virulent assault on the more obvious weaknesses of the university system sounds almost as though it had some personal basis (you spent eight years or so as an assistant professor at West Georgia College: Did the question of tenure ever come up, I wonder?). Presumably your current denigration of bodies such as the NEH is calculated, among other things, to win you cheap kudos with those philistines and fundamentalists who can't hear the word "humanism" without blowing off like Jeremiah. But it might give you pause to know that I was able to complete the crucial final draft of *Alexander to Actium*—which required freedom from other obligations—only because I won an NEH senior fellowship. I have to ask you, Dr. Gingrich: Would you rather possess that book (never mind your misunderstanding of it) or earn possible votes by making a bonfire of the NEH? Because you can't have it both ways, now can you?

PETER GREEN is a professor of classics at the University of Texas at Austin and the author of *Alexander to Actium* (University of California Press).

In defense of the Tofflers.

NEWT'S NOT-SO-WEIRD GURUS

By John B. Judis

Before last November, once-bestselling authors Alvin and Heidi Toffler had fallen into relative obscurity. They were interviewed regularly by publications like *Information Week* and *The New Perspectives Quarterly* but not by *The Washington Post* or *U.S. News and World Report*. Their last book, *War and Anti-War*, had landed on remainder tables after a year. Like W. Edwards Deming, they were better known in Japan than the United States. But all that changed when Newt Gingrich became Speaker of the House. Cast as his mentors—Gingrich has been an acknowledged devotee for over two decades—the Tofflers are being scrutinized for clues about the Speaker's true convictions. *The New York Times Magazine* ran an adulatory interview with the Tofflers; *The Boston Globe* profiled the "odd trio" they made with Gingrich. A slim anthology, *Creating a New Civilization*, with an introduction by Gingrich, became a best-seller. Alvin Toffler, who is 66 but looks at least a decade younger, is delighted by this new surge of attention. "It's like telling a joke and finally being able to deliver the punch line," he told me during a recent visit to Washington.

But the price of such attention has been willful misunderstanding of their work. Liberals cite Gingrich's admiration of the Tofflers as further proof of his wackiness. In a *Los Angeles Times* column on Gingrich, Robert Borosage, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, pronounced Alvin Toffler's major book, *The Third Wave*, a "melange of pulp sociology, pop culture, and hot facts." Staid conservatives attack the Tofflers to express their disapproval of Gingrich's futurism and libertarianism. "I've never understood [the Tofflers]," former Secretary of Education William Bennett told *The New York Times* last December. "I've always regarded it as the emperor's new clothes. If futurists are really futurists, why do they bother writing books? Why don't they play the market?" Pat Buchanan is even more dismissive, labeling the Tofflers' work "some kind of nonsense."

These are predictable reactions, but the Tofflers deserve better. They are not academic social scientists, but that shouldn't necessarily be a drawback at a time when so much of academic social science is dominated by neo-positivism and bad French philosophy. They certainly aren't world-historical geniuses on the order of de Tocqueville or Weber, but they are serious stu-

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dents of economic history whose work is much closer to Daniel Bell and Peter Drucker than to John Naisbitt and George Gilder. During the '60s, they were among the first to understand the dramatic changes in work and society created by computer technology. Alvin Toffler authored studies for IBM, Xerox and AT&T that anticipated by decades the problems of technological unemployment and bureaucratic stasis.

The Tofflers are often described as "popularizers," but it's usually their own ideas they are condensing into slogans and catchwords. Alvin Toffler was among the first to write about the rise of home offices (the "electronic cottage"), "flextime" and team work, and the growth of a new "infosphere" that melded computers, televisions and telephones. Some of their recent work is seriously flawed, but the first big books that Alvin Toffler wrote—*Future Shock* (1970) and *The Third Wave* (1980)—still stand up under scrutiny.

While Gingrich's fascination with the Tofflers' ideas does reveal something about how the Speaker thinks, it is also misleading to identify the Tofflers' philosophy with that of conservative Republicans. Alvin and Heidi Toffler began as Marxists and spent five years during the 1950s organizing workers in Ohio factories. They are no longer either Marxists or socialists, but like Marx they see history as consisting of progressive stages, propelled forward by underlying changes in the way people produce goods, services and ideas. Like Daniel Bell, C. Wright Mills, Christopher Lasch and James Burnham, the Tofflers have tried to go beyond, rather than simply repudiate, Marx and the Enlightenment. In this, they are diametrically opposed to many American conservatives from Russell Kirk and Leo Strauss to Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson, who regard the past as paradise lost.

The Tofflers insist that they are neither Republicans nor Democrats. They say—and anyone who reads their work will concur—that they are as close politically to Al Gore as they are to the Republican leadership. Since the '60s, the Tofflers have argued that American politics and economics were based on obsolete models drawn from the country's industrial past. That has put them roughly equidistant from Democratic traditionalists who see the country's hopes in the revival of the urban factory and Republican conservatives who want to restore the small-town America of the 1950s. As they wrote of Democrats and Republicans last year, "One side still dreams of River Rouge, the other dreams of Ozzie and Harriet."

Alvin Toffler is the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland. He met Heidi Toffler, now 65, the daughter of Dutch Jewish immigrants, just before his senior year at New York University, in the summer of 1948. (According to Toffler, the books he has written since have all been collaborative efforts, though only the last two bear both their names.)

After college, where both had worked for Henry Wallace's Progressive Party, the Tofflers set out for a factory in Cleveland that made window fans. In those days, college students didn't just go off by themselves to organize, but Alvin Toffler repeatedly dodged my questions about what political group he was working for, asking finally, "Are you from the FBI?" I concluded from what he said, and from coy hints, that he either belonged to or worked very closely with the Communist Party. When I asked him if he studied at NYU with the socialist—but militantly anti-Communist—philosopher Sidney Hook, he said he thought then of Hook as a "terrible reactionary." When I asked him if he had been a Trotskyist, he said Trotskyists were the "bad guys." He also said he would have quit the factory after two years but that during the McCarthy witch-hunts he felt obliged to stick by his organizing friends: "It was one thing to change your ideology; it was another thing to change your friends and rat on them."

While in Ohio, the Tofflers abandoned the promise of socialist revolution. "It became apparent that the immiseration of the worker wasn't happening," Toffler said. "We either had to give up the theory or give up on reality." Equally important, they abandoned the vision of the urban factory as the prototypical social institution—a vision shared in the twentieth century by both Marxists and liberals. What they retained was Marx's systematic approach to history. "The most important thing I learned," Toffler said, "was that there were ways of looking at history as something that was more than episodic. We came away with the idea that there is such a thing as a model and that you could think of social change in a systematic way."

By the early '60s, Toffler had become a journalist, writing for publications from the West Virginia *Labor's Daily* to *Fortune* magazine. He had also become interested in how new technology was altering everyday assumptions about work, family and government. He got to know Kenneth Boulding, Bertram Gross and a group of thinkers at Rand who saw themselves as "futurists" trying to chart this new reality. In 1965, Toffler wrote an article for *Horizon*, a glossy monthly, called "The Future as a Way of Life," in which he introduced the concept of "future shock" (the analogy he drew was to "culture shock.") The article won him a $15,000 book contract from Random House, and Toffler spent the next five years writing *Future Shock*. It would become a best-seller and along with its successor, *The Third Wave*, constituted an extended argument for bringing American politics in line with this new reality.

In *Future Shock*, influenced in its style by the pioneering sociological journalism of William H. Whyte and Vance Packard, Toffler argued that Americans were witnessing an "acceleration of change" that was not only transforming industries and nations but upsetting century-old patterns of social and economic life. As late as the 1950s, Americans could still expect to stay in one job for their entire life, live in one town, perhaps in the same neighborhood and house, and surround themselves with the same family, friends and

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possessions. Little girls clung to one Raggedy Ann throughout their childhoods. Men kept a favorite Parker pen for decades. Cars were repaired rather than replaced. Not everyone enjoyed this kind of stability, but those who did not, like the recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, could reasonably aspire to it.

As Toffler argued in *Future Shock*, this pattern of life eroded dramatically after World War II. Workers began to change jobs, homes, friends and even families several times over a lifetime. Products were no longer designed for a lifetime of use but, like Bic pens or disposable diapers or latest-model Barbies, were made to be used briefly and then discarded. Individuals were no longer bound together socially by class and ethnic origin, but sought to transcend these bonds by changing their "lifestyles" and even their personalities. Businesses were no longer structured according to strict vertical hierarchies but by what Toffler called the "adhocracies" of project teams and consultants.

According to Toffler, the principal cause of this accelerated rate of change was "that great, growling engine of change—technology." Americans were living through what Toffler called a "super-industrial revolution." By reducing the amount of time necessary to produce goods, new technology had eliminated many agricultural and manufacturing jobs, while creating new demand for specialists in services and information. These new jobs, which put a premium on education and knowledge rather than physical strength and punctuality, had become subject to constant redefinition. The new information industries also required new styles of management and organization alien to the Taylorism of the factory. (For Toffler, 1956 was the breakthrough: the first year when more workers were engaged in producing services than in making goods, when commercial jet travel became widespread and when the birth control pill was introduced.)

Accelerated change had created a new freedom from the kind of standardization and regimentation that social critics associated with the older industrial era: "The people of the future enjoy greater opportunities for self-realization than any previous group in history." But it also created anxiety. "Future shock is the dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future," Toffler wrote. "It may be the most important disease of tomorrow." Toffler identified a variety of future-shock symptoms, including "the spreading use of drugs, the rise of mysticism, the recurrent outbreaks of vandalism and undirected violence, the politics of nihilism and nostalgia, and the sick apathy of millions."

Much of what Toffler wrote in *Future Shock* is now accepted common sense, but at the time it defied conventional views of reality. Even during the '60s, most Americans still held an image of their society borrowed from the industrial past. The common image of white-collar work—of humdrum conformity and regimentation—was derived from Whyte's *The Organization Man*. Americans' deep est fears of the future were expressed by Georg Orwell's lockstep world of *1984*. In the first major new left protest, Berkeley's Mario Savio railed in 196 against being "standardized, replaceable, and irrele vant." But Toffler, who had spent five years in a factor understood that Americans' greatest problem was nc being consigned to the tedium of the assembly line o the office. As he put it: "The problem is not whethe man can survive regimentation and standardizatior The problem ... is whether he can survive freedom."

As a veteran of the left, Toffler also understood th superficiality of '60s radicalism. He saw both the new left counterculture and new right of Barry Goldwate and George Wallace as expressions of nostalgia. "Th middle-aged right-wing reversionist yearns for the sin ple, ordered society of the small town—the slow-pace social environment in which his old routines were ap propriate. The youthful left-wing reversionist dream of reviving an even older social system. This romant cism fills the posters and poetry of the hippie an post-hippie subcultures."

For all these strengths, however, *Future Shock* su fered from the fleeting preoccupations of the era i which it was written. While Toffler's view of underlyin change was correct, he read far too much into th social hysteria of the '60s, which was triggered not sin ply by the transformation of work and family but b the enormous upheaval of the civil rights struggle an the war in Vietnam. When the war ended, much of th outward hysteria that Toffler identified with mental il ness passed, but the anxiety remained. It was ev denced, among other things, by the development c doomsday environmentalism and the growth of funda mentalist and Pentecostal Protestantism (Hal Lindsey apocalyptic *The Late Great Planet Earth*, published i 1970, was the runaway best-seller of the decade).

When he wrote *Future Shock*, Toffler was also in th grip of a facile futurism. He confused the technolog cally possible with the historically probable, ignorin the mesh of social relations in which technologica change takes place. Some of Toffler's predictions i *Future Shock* were remarkably prescient, but other reflected a daffy technological determinism—his pre dictions of widespread genetic cloning and of under sea colonization, for example. But in his next book which took a decade to produce, Toffler offered a sub tler, less crankish view of change.

While *Future Shock* was written in the inductiv style of journalism, moving from anecdote t observation to explanation, *The Third Wave* i written deductively as a theory of world his tory, beginning with certain structural principles an then proceeding from agricultural through industria through "super-industrial" society.

The mood of *The Third Wave* is also different. Whil *Future Shock* suffered from the hysteria and hype o the '60s, *The Third Wave* is much more dispassionat and sunny. The book, Toffler wrote, was based on th

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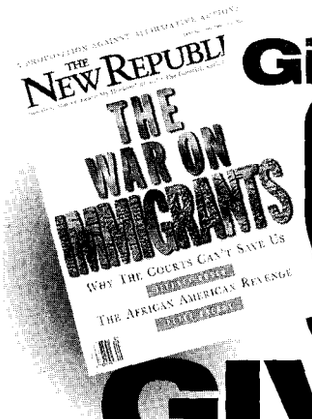

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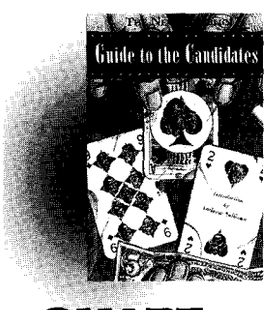

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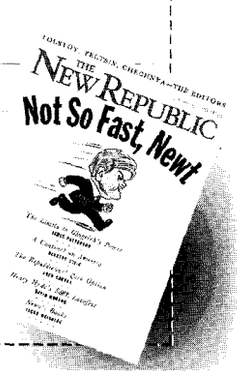

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"assumption that we are the final generation of an old civilization and the first generation of a new one, and that much of our personal confusion, anguish, and disorientation can be traced directly to the conflict within us, and within our political institutions, between the dying Second Wave civilization and the emergent Third Wave civilization that is thundering to take its place." At its worst, *The Third Wave* is Panglossian; at its best, it describes a future that is only now emerging.

In Toffler's conception, First Wave civilization is devoted primarily to agricultural production for immediate use rather than sale. Its center of production is the land and home, and the family itself is the basic unit of production. Time and labor are governed by sunlight and the seasons, and nature is feared and sometimes worshiped. The Second Wave corresponds to industrial capitalism and Soviet socialism, where the factory and city become the centralized centers of production for exchange, regulated by the state. The division between home and work is clearly demarcated; workers become interchangeable components; and nature is seen as an antagonist to be subjugated.

In Third Wave societies, the factory and city recede. Workers, no longer interchangeable, are valued for their skill and knowledge; goods production, no longer bound by centralized systems of energy production or transportation and directed toward specialized markets, becomes decentralized. Just as in the First Wave, work begins to be done at home but this time as part of a global computer network. And within the home, consumers also assemble their own furniture, appliances, clothes and electronic equipment out of the components they buy on the market.

The corporation is also transformed. As knowledge and skill become central to authority, corporate hierarchies become flattened. Workers participate in management decisions, and management itself is more loosely structured around project groups. Family life grows much more idiosyncratic and diverse, encompassing traditional nuclear families, gay marriages, communes and single parents. Schools are more individualized and more closely linked to the home. "Symbiosis or harmony with the earth" emerges as an important goal.

Government changes accordingly. It no longer caters to an undifferentiated mass clientele but to competing minority interests. Many of the central government's functions are either privatized or shifted back to regions and states where they can be more closely tailored to voters' needs. The power of the nation-state also shrinks, as control over trade and matters such as environmental regulation shifts to supranational bodies or simply to the anarchy of global financial markets. "What appears to be emerging is neither a corporation-dominated future nor a global government but a far more complex system similar to the matrix organizations we saw springing up in certain advanced industries," writes Toffler.

In *The Third Wave*, Toffler was borrowing and discarding parts of the Marxist legacy in order to create a new historical synthesis. His distinction between industrial and agricultural societies and his characterization of Second Wave production were pure Marx. Toffler also used a loose version of the Marxist distinction between base and superstructure—between the overall sphere of production, on the one hand, and all other areas of social and political life on the other. The "de-massification" of government and the family reflected the "de-massification" of production.

There is also a striking resemblance between Toffler's concept of the Third Wave and Marx's somewhat inchoate view of communism. Just as Marx's communism represented a return to an earlier form of tribal communalism, the Third Wave represents a return to elements of the First Wave. But while Marx's communism was a millennial utopia, based upon the achievement of an overwhelming abundance, Toffler's Third Wave is an attempt to look realistically beyond the factory-dominated stage of industrial capitalism. Toffler also rejects the idea of class struggle as the key to moving from one historical stage to another. The conflict he sees is more likely to be between than within successive waves, and members of different classes are more united than divided by the industries they work in. "Representatives of the Third Wave would include everybody from Bill Gates to a receptionist at Microsoft," he explained.

"The Second Wave camp still includes a majority of the nominal power-holders in our society—politicians, businessmen, union leaders, educators, the heads of the mass media," Toffler wrote in *The Third Wave*. "The advocates of the Third Wave are more difficult to characterize. Some head up major corporations while others are zealous anticorporate consumerists. Some are worried environmentalists; others are more concerned with the issues of sexual roles, family life, or personal growth. Some focus almost exclusively on the development of alternative energy forms; others are mainly excited by the democratic promise of the communications revolution."

Toffler's politics in *The Third Wave* defy easy categorization. He's not a fierce opponent of federal government but does want many of its functions contracted out, devolved onto localities or moved upwards into transnational organizations. He places a "high priority on environmental programs" and favors tough regulation and government support for renewable, decentralized energy forms. He favors "legitimate options to the nuclear family." He thinks the old industrial labor unions have become obsolete and posits new community organizations that would reflect the growing power of the home. He wants electronic networks to lay the basis for a "direct democracy." His vision is that of an electronic community bound together by the confluence of home and work, but unlike older close-knit com-

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A message from Negative Population Growth, Inc.

The Jordan Commission's Proposals on Immigration

In June, Barbara Jordan and her Commission on Immigration Reform recommended that the U.S. reduce legal immigration by nearly one third. For that proposal we congratulate and commend them, recognizing the courage it required. The Commission, to its great credit, has clearly asserted that substantially lower immigration is in the national interest. **But, in our view, the proposed reduction falls far short of what is needed.**

The Central Issue

Sadly, no environmental rationale was offered by the Commission for its proposed reduction. We believe it is critically important for the Commission to justify its proposal by recognizing the impact of immigration on U.S. population growth, and by affirming the urgent need to substantially reduce that impact in order to stabilize U.S. population at a sustainable level.

Beyond any question, immigration's impact on U.S. population growth (and, therefore, on our environment and resources) is the central issue. Immigration must not be viewed in isolation, but as an integral part of a national population policy designed to halt, and eventually to reverse, the mindless and disastrous growth of our population. Our goal must be to stabilize our population, as soon as possible, at a sustainable level. That would require a population far smaller than today's.

More Immigrants Mean a Larger Population

Immigrants, and their descendants, are the driving force behind the growth that could well bring our population to half a billion in the next century. **The effects of immigration on our population growth, not secondary issues such as jobs or welfare costs, should determine how many immigrants our nation admits.**

Greater Reductions in Immigration Are Needed

What would happen to U.S. population growth if the Commission's proposal to allow 550,000 core legal immigrants a year became law? Our projections show that with 550,000 net immigration, and with current fertility of 2.0 persisting, our population would grow to 354 million by 2050, and to 386 million by the end of the next century. Such growth would surely cripple our environment and degrade the quality of our lives.

These numbers could be even higher, since our assumptions are conservative. First, we assume optimistically that the number of U.S. residents leaving (emigrating) each year offsets the number of illegal settlers. But unless controls become far more stringent, the number of illegal settlers will continue to exceed emigration, adding to future population growth.

Second, the Commission was vague with regard to the limits on immediate relatives. Left unclear is whether immediate relatives of citizens, now 250,000 a year and growing, will continue to enter outside of quota, without limit. If so, core immigration of 550,000 a year, plus immediate relatives, could equal or exceed the present level of 800,000 a year. Moreover, the recommended 50,000 yearly limit on refugees could be raised at will.

We Must Reduce Both Immigration and Fertility

For an early end to U.S. population growth, NPG recommends an end to all illegal immigration, and a comprehensive, airtight ceiling of 100,000 a year on all legal immigration, including relatives, refugees, asylees, and skilled workers. At that reduced level, and with fertility continuing at 2.0, our population would reach 321 million in 2050, and would still be a high 314 million by the end of the next century. **Such growth, although far less than the growth that would result from the Commission's proposal, would still be unacceptable. What we urgently need is not a larger U.S. population, but a far smaller one.**

Clearly, a negative rate of population growth demands that we reduce substantially our fertility as well as immigration. NPG has long recommended non-coercive incentives to encourage parents to have no more than two children. If American women accepted a two-child limit, total fertility would drop to around 1.5 (the level we recommend) since many women choose to have only one child, or none.

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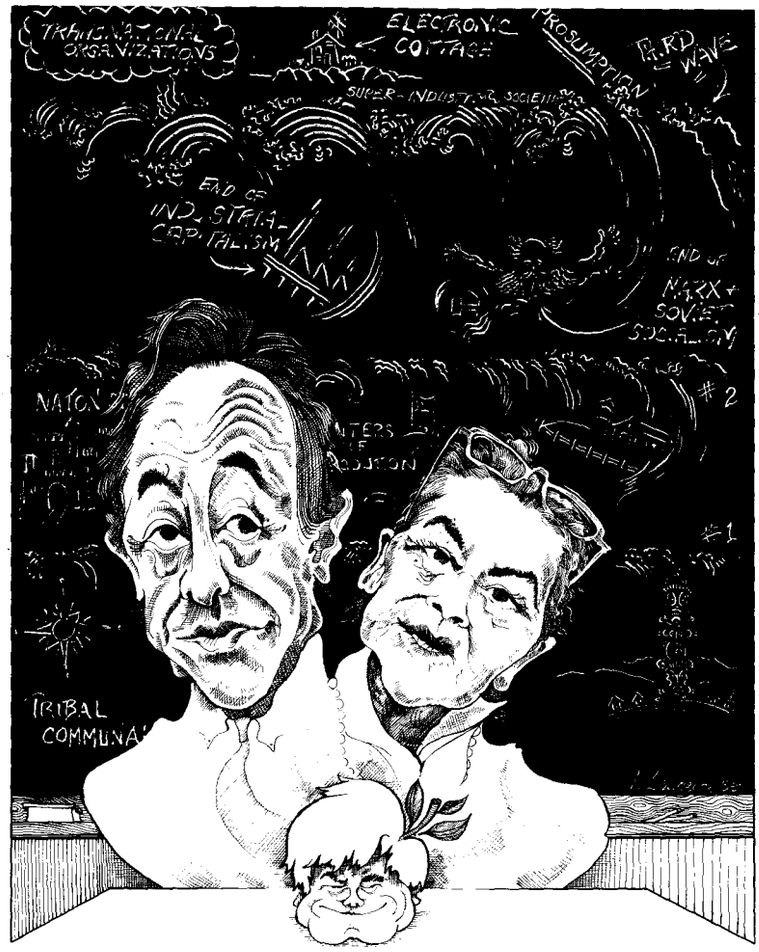
munities, committed to free speech and expression, without which the knowledge-based industry of the Third Wave cannot flourish.

In *The Third Wave*, Toffler was at his most provocative and persuasive describing how the new technology—the forces of production—are altering every facet of economic and social life. Though he finished *The Third Wave* three years before IBM introduced a $5,500 personal computer, Toffler fully anticipated the rise of the PC. "Home computers will soon be selling for little more than a television set," he wrote. He also anticipated the rise of cable and of a national information highway and the proliferation of computer chips. "The giant centralized computer with its whirring tapes and complex cooling systems ... will be supplemented by myriad chips of intelligence, embedded in one form or another in every home, hospital, hotel, every vehicle and appliance, virtually every building brick. The electronic environment will literally converse with us."



ALVIN AND HEIDI TOFFLER BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Toffler was at his least persuasive describing how the Third Wave would impinge on larger political-economic structures. He argued, for example, that under the Third Wave the economy was being "radically decentralized." His observation was right on target when it came to individual firms: operations *were* being decentralized as divisions were spun off, sometimes shipped overseas, and work at home was accelerating. But within the economy as a whole, control of capital was being further centralized. Even the computer industry—once a myriad of small creative start-ups and the inspiration for the '80s myth of the small entrepreneur—is increasingly dominated by a handful of software and hardware giants.

Similarly, while Toffler was certainly prescient in seeing a trend toward home production, he overreached when he argued that the labor involved in assembling commodities at home would bring the "power of the market ... into question." Toffler was still bewitched by Marx's model of a pure, "market-less" communism. Consumers who put together bicycles bought at Sports Authority or build decks from materials purchased at Home Depot are not exactly bringing the market into question. They are merely making it easier for companies to produce and sell goods on a modular basis that can be adapted to different markets. When a family fills out a will at home using a computer program rather than employing a lawyer, they may be depriving lawyers of market income, but they are also enriching the market for software or CD-ROMs.

Toffler's portrayal of the home worker is also misleading. There is a vast difference between the programmer who works at home and the telemarketer who answers direct-mail product queries at home for L.L. Bean or Ticketmaster, yet both are products of the Third Wave. Put the image of the programmer together with that of the decentralized company and you get Toffler's halcyon view of Third Wave democracy. Put the telemarketer together with the new breed of highly centralized computer or retail conglomerates and you get a specter of powerlessness that recalls the textile piece worker of the early industrial revolution.

Toffler was equally Pollyannish about the Third Wave's effect on underdeveloped countries. In *The Third Wave*, he held out the promise of "Gandhi with satellites"—of First Wave countries vaulting over the Second Wave entirely. "Tomorrow's development strategies will come not from Washington or Moscow or Paris or Geneva but from Africa, Asia and Latin America," he wrote. Toffler's optimism about such a prospect made his book a best-seller in China, but it is surely unfounded. The Asian nations that have made their way into the Third Wave have done so by way of Second Wave industrialization. And the African countries that remain tied to agriculture and extractive industries do not seem good prospects for semiconductor factories or software development. They seem more likely to be left permanently behind or "decoupled"—a possibility that Toffler acknowledged in his later books.

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The same problem may affect workers and communities in the United States that are now cut off from super-industrial society. Toffler raised this point briefly in *The Third Wave* but limited himself to asking questions ("What about cities? What happens to unemployment figures?") rather than providing answers. He says the "problem remains insoluble within the framework of Second Wave economies," but it may be even more insoluble under economies that reward only highly skilled labor and make the central city irrelevant as an economic region. The alternative to Toffler's sunny vision in *The Third Wave* may not be not Orwell's *1984* but William Gibson's 1984 novel, *Neuromancer*, which portrays a world dominated by a few super-automated, giant transnational electronic firms, in which most citizens live out marginal, semi-criminal existences, playing arcade games, surfing the Net and taking and selling drugs.

In the wake of *The Third Wave*'s enormous success—it was a global best-seller—the Tofflers became international celebrities. Chinese party leader and reformer Zhao Ziyang sought their advice, as did Mikhail Gorbachev. They were, and still are, lionized in Japan. (At the Japanese restaurant where I took Toffler, our star-struck waiter recognized him from Japanese television and asked for his autograph.) Ted Turner claimed he'd gotten the idea for CNN from *The Third Wave*. Lucrative lecture invitations poured in.

American politicians also paid homage. In the '70s, House Democrats sought Toffler's advice. In 1975, Representatives Charles Rose and John Culver held a conference on anticipatory democracy with Toffler as the featured speaker. Rose then started the Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future, which was chaired in the '80s by Al Gore. After *The Third Wave*, Republicans began to seek Toffler's advice. Republican operative Lee Atwater invited him to the White House to address the Domestic Policy Council. Later, he was invited to meet with Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Gingrich eventually became the most important of all Alvin and Heidi Toffler's boosters. The Tofflers first met him in 1971 when the Georgian, an instructor at West Georgia College and an enthusiastic reader of *Future Shock*, journeyed to Chicago to hear Alvin Toffler speak. Four years later, when Rose and Culver were looking for a Republican to attend their conference, Alvin Toffler suggested Gingrich. After Gingrich entered the House in 1978, he championed the Tofflers' ideas to Republican House members and to Pentagon generals who were interested in new electronic warfare.

From that time, Gingrich and the Tofflers began a series of regular visits and discussions. According to Jeff Eisenach, the director of the Progress and Freedom Foundation and a close associate of both the Tofflers and Gingrich, Gingrich ended up influencing the Tofflers as much as they influenced him. Said Eisenach, "Newt has learned from them a great deal, and he has provoked them. There is no doubt over the course of that time, Al's views, at least, have gotten more clearly libertarian, increasingly skeptical of the role that government can play and the way government can play it."

The adulation from abroad and the attention from Washington did not, however, have a particularly salutary effect on Toffler's work. The final book in his trilogy, *Powershift*, which came out in 1990, is his least impressive. Written in the journalistic style of *Future Shock*, it is filled with awkward neologisms ("cognitariat"), obscure acronyms (VANs, EDIs) and what read like soundbytes from the lecture circuit. Though ostensibly concerned with knowledge and power, it fails to maintain a single clear argument about either.

Powershift suffered from Toffler's attempt to reflect the political fashions of the '80s. With even less justification than before, Toffler repeated the same fallacious arguments about corporate and financial power that he had made in *The Third Wave*. "The big corporation or company is no longer necessarily the central institution for the production of material wealth in the capitalist world," he wrote, just as the global auto industry was shrinking to a handful of companies and electronics firms were taking over entertainment and communications companies.

Perhaps under Gingrich's influence, Toffler tried to come to terms with the anti-government sentiment of the Reagan years. In *The Third Wave*, he had accurately portrayed the power of the state being sapped from below and above. In *Powershift*, on the other hand, he portrays the state as the last bastion of Second Wave supremacy and as a force for reaction in its own right. The state, Toffler writes, "is in business to stay in power. Whatever the economic costs to the rest of us, it will seek ways to harness the latest communications revolution to its purpose."

Sounding like Bakunin or Albert Jay Nock, Toffler warned that "we now face the ultimate political powershift. We can redesign democracy for the twenty-first century—or descend into a new Dark Age. One path moves power from the state toward the individual. The other threatens to shrink the individual to zero. Nothing in the foreseeable future is about to take the gun out of the hands of the state." Applied to the United States, where the civil service and military have historically wielded little power of their own and where the operation of the state has reflected—sometimes too transparently—competing interests within civil society, this is errant nonsense.

It's also destructive nonsense. Like the family, the national government is in need of redefinition rather than demolition. The question is how the government can help ensure that the development of new Third Wave industries benefits all, or at least most, Americans, and not simply a few. With the decline of unions and the decentralization of work, the national government remains the dispersed public's main bulwark

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against the centralized power of transnational corporations and international finance. It has to represent the country in new supranational forums like the World Trade Organization. It is also the main instrument through which Americans can warrant that, as more tasks are returned to the states, social policy does not revert to the beggar-thy-neighbor conditions that prevailed in the nineteenth century—that, for instance, states are not driven to compete with each other in driving down services to the poor and disabled or in reducing environment and worker-safety regulations.

Toffler is even less persuasive when he describes who is going to permit this enormous aggrandizement of state power to occur. Resorting to sheer hyperbole, Toffler warns in *Powershift* against "giant forces now racing toward convergence in a worldwide crusade that could, if we are not careful, sweep us into a new Dark Age." At the top of Toffler's list are Christian fundamentalists and other religious extremists who "are determined to seize power over the lives and minds of whole nations, continents, the planet itself." Then there are the "ecotheocrats" who, in contrast to "mainstream environmentalists," want to "plunge society into pre-technological medievalism and asceticism" and the "new Xenophobes" who oppose Mexican immigration and bash Japan. Granted some of these may be nasty folks, but they are miscast as the defenders of Second Wave bureaucracy and as potential allies in a new totalitarianism.

In *Powershift*, Toffler became exactly the kind of theorist he'd warned against in his first books. Like the social critics of the '60s who thundered against the dangers of conformity and regimentation in an era when the industrial model of organization was beginning to disintegrate, Toffler warned of bureaucratic excess at a time when state power associated with the Second Wave was already under attack and crumbling. And like those critics, he reinforced his warnings with apocalyptic prophecies of breakdown and tyranny.

Toffler is still well worth reading, however, when he discusses specific policies. At several points in *Powershift* and in the two new chapters he and Heidi Toffler wrote in 1994 for *Creating a New Civilization*, he advances his own argument beyond that of *The Third Wave*. He is particularly effective in responding to conventional liberal programs for the economy. Toffler argues, for example, that the answer to low service-sector wages is "not to bewail the relative decline of manufacturing jobs, but to increase service productivity, and to invent new forms of workforce organization and collective bargaining." That's basically right.

Similarly, the Tofflers acknowledge that in the short run, competition from low-wage industrial competitors holds down wages in the U.S., but insist that in the long run, low-wage competition will prove irrelevant. "Better technology, faster and better information flows, decreased inventory, or streamlined organization can yield savings far beyond any that can be squeezed out of hourly workers," Alvin Toffler writes. Toffler, who was a strong supporter of the North American Free Trade Agreement, favors training workers to take Third Wave jobs rather than protecting Second Wave jobs from foreign competition. He prefers, he told me, the Clinton administration's plan to grant workers training vouchers over Gingrich's plan to shift responsibility for worker training to the states.

In *Powershift*, Toffler acknowledges that the transition to a Third Wave economy has deepened the plight of the underclass, but he rejects a program of simply pumping money into inner cities or providing tax breaks to attract industry—the kind of approach favored by Jesse Jackson, on the one hand, and by Jack Kemp on the other. "An effective strategy for reducing joblessness in a super-symbolic economy must depend less on the allocation of wealth and more on the allocation of knowledge," he writes. Unless there is some way to train inner-city workers to participate in the new economy, the money invested or the tax breaks provided will be wasted. Toffler's economic program in *Powershift* is to "make sure that all citizens, poor and rich alike, are guaranteed access to the widest possible range of media."

That has a utopian ring to it, like Gingrich's proposal to provide a laptop to every ghetto-dweller. In *Creating a New Civilization* the Tofflers argue more realistically for an expansion of lower-level service jobs. They write, "America needs more, not less, service-sector employment to improve the quality of life of its people. That means jobs for everyone from electronics repairmen to recyclers, from healthcare providers and people who help the elderly to police and firefighters, and—yes—it even means jobs for childcare providers and for domestic workers who are desperately needed in millions of two-income homes." Then the problem becomes the one defined most clearly by Peter Drucker—preventing a growing gap between service workers and knowledge workers.

While the Tofflers sometimes reinforce the most conservative anti-government rhetoric, they recognize that government will have to play a role in easing the strains created by the onset of the Third Wave. "Free-marketism and trickle-downism twisted into rigid theological dogmas are inadequate responses to the Third Wave," they write. Alvin Toffler recalled for me his discussion before the Reagan administration's Domestic Policy Council: "They said we have to get rid of the welfare system. I said, 'Yes, but you have to have something in its place.' We could have the same conversation today."

Alvin Toffler now rests his hopes for an adequate response to the Third Wave squarely on Newt Gingrich's shoulders. He's been reading Robert Blake's biography of Disraeli and sees some lessons there. "I could Xerox twenty or thirty pages of that book, and you wouldn't be able to tell whether it was about Newt or Disraeli, down to the name of his wife," Toffler said. Disraeli succeeded in overcoming the torpor and illusions within his own Tory Party to lead England into the twentieth century. Toffler is hoping that Gingrich can overcome what he calls the "fringe element" in his

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own party, particularly the religious right, so that he can lead this country into the Third Wave.

Twenty-five years ago, Pat Moynihan recommended Blake's biography to Richard Nixon, hoping Nixon would see himself as Disraeli. It didn't work. But Toffler has some reason to hope for a better outcome. Unlike other conservative Republicans, Gingrich has never displayed a rigid faith in eighteenth-century laissez-faire economics. Unlike Bennett or Irving Kristol, he has a respect for science that doesn't permit him to condone Creationism and other forms of religious quackery. He has a lively, if not brilliant, mind and a genuine intellectual curiosity.

Gingrich has also assiduously promoted the Tofflers' ideas. The Tofflers' concept of an information explosion forms the framework for Gingrich's first book, *Window of Opportunity,* published in 1984. Gingrich devotes a two-hour lecture in his series on "Renewing American Civilization" to "The Third Wave Information Age," which includes several video excerpts from Alvin Toffler himself. And a chapter of his new book, *To Renew America,* is about "America and the Third Wave Information Age."

The Speaker doesn't simply mouth these ideas. As far back as 1971, he was advising the administration of West Georgia College to concentrate on creating a campus-wide computer network rather than a bigger library building. (Gingrich's recommendations were reprinted recently in *Wired.*) He wants government to speed the transition toward an information-based economy. That accounts for his commendable resistance to censorship on the Internet and for his support in the past for government funding of high technology and smart weaponry.

But Gingrich also differs from the Tofflers—in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. He did not come to an understanding of the Third Wave through Marx and through comparing experience in an auto plant and in IBM, but through the science fiction of Isaac Asimov. Gingrich has a little boy's fascination with space travel—in *Window of Opportunity* he advocated a new "space populism," and in *To Renew America* he predicts that by 2020 honeymoons in space will be in vogue.

More important, he is afflicted by the same facile technological determinism that pervaded *Future Shock* but that the Tofflers later abandoned. In his lecture on the Third Wave, for instance, Gingrich attributes the change in dress codes around the world to the proliferation of blue jeans. In fact, it's the reverse. Dress codes have changed as nations have adopted the culture of the Third Wave, which is itself a product of changes in work life that began in the U.S. during the 1950s. Technological determinism also shapes Gingrich's thinking about policy. This year, he proposed solving the problem of the ghetto by providing a free laptop to every teenager. It's an idea that assumes that the mere introduction of the technology—like the introduction of gunpowder in Japan in the nineteenth century—will transform deep-seated social patterns. In the face of ridicule (and of demands to know where the money would come from), Gingrich temporarily withdrew his suggestion, but he has returned to it in his latest lectures.

Gingrich has also adopted the Tofflers' rosy view of a decentralized Third Wave capitalism while failing to acknowledge its darker side. In *To Renew America,* for instance, Gingrich rhapsodizes about a "revolution in goods and services that will empower and enhance most people."

"Imagine a morning in just a decade or so," he goes on. "You wake up to a wall-size, high-definition television showing surf off Maui.... You walk or jog or do Stairmaster while catching up on the morning news and beginning to review your day's schedule. Your home office is filled with communications devices, so you can ignore rush-hour traffic."

Gingrich sees no pitfalls in the growth of new media and information conglomerates, insisting that like IBM they will eventually be curbed by new competitors armed with new ideas. He has advocated complete deregulation of telecommunications and wants to eliminate entirely the Federal Communications Commission. Far more than his gurus the Tofflers, he is willing to rest his faith entirely on the magic of the free market.

Gingrich has quarreled repeatedly with the Tofflers over abortion, school prayer and other points on the religious right's agenda. But the differences actually run deeper. Alongside his technological determinism, Gingrich espouses a secularized version of a religious view of history. He sees large-scale historical change as the direct result of the good or evil deeds of leaders rather than as the product of broader social and economic forces. In *To Renew America,* he explains American history since 1965—from family breakdown to falling wages—as the result of a "calculated effort by cultural elites to discredit this civilization and replace it with a culture of irresponsibility."

This view of history is entirely inconsistent with the attempts of the Tofflers, and of Peter Drucker, Daniel Bell and others, to comprehend the new global future. It dwells entirely on the surface of events, letting the ghosted speeches of politicians guide its assessment of underlying causes. It ignores what Hegel called the "cunning of reason" that defies individual wills. In its contemporary version—as articulated by Gingrich, Bennett or Robertson—it abandons the Enlightenment view of history for the religious right's apocalyptic fears of spiritual and moral decline.

Is Gingrich simply currying favor with the Republicans' evangelical base? Or is he really of two minds about the meaning of history? The answer isn't obvious—which ought to make the Tofflers skeptical about whether they have found their voice in the new political era. Toffler may have gotten to tell the punch line of his three-decade-long joke, but it's not yet clear whether Gingrich, let alone the other Republicans and Democrats in Congress, have really gotten it. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Division, Delay, Drag

Since the (virtual) retirement of Bergman, few European directors have made better films than Margarethe von Trotta—at her best. *Sisters* was an elegy for modern women that, so to speak, keeps singing in our ears. *Marianne and Julianne* is a premier political film, an agon of the liberal dilemma of our times, again dramatized in the relations of two sisters. The screenplay of *Rosa Luxemburg* simply could not do justice to the life, but it is splendidly directed and acted. The beings of women, in personal and political crisis, have been von Trotta's chief concern before and after these pinnacle films, and she has moved onward.

Not always, however, with comparable success. *The Long Silence*, about the widow of a Milanese magistrate slain by the Mafia, was all right but not memorable. I haven't seen von Trotta's film derived from Chekhov's *Three Sisters*: it hasn't been released here and wasn't well received where it was shown. Now comes **The Promise** (Fine Line), in which she returns to Germany and tells the story, running thirty years from the erection of the Berlin Wall to its demolition, of the effect of the Wall on a pair of lovers. Again it's all right, not memorable.

At the start a group of young East Germans escape to West Berlin through sewers. One of the group, Konrad, stays behind, though his girlfriend, Sophie, has fled. We follow their lives in East and West Germany through the years, mostly apart except for an interlude in Prague. Sophie eventually learns English and becomes a tour guide in the West; Konrad, an astrophysicist, rises to the top of his profession. Each life has rewards and troubles. Sophie's is free but somewhat undynamic, Konrad's is successful as long as he toes party lines. Each finds another partner in the course of time, though Sophie's son was fathered by Konrad during the Prague episode.

Much of the film, written by von Trotta and Peter Schneider, is painlessly didactic. We see the advantages, heavily paternalistic, of a career in a communist country; see the lack of an organizing dynamics in the West. As the years pass, and as a second set of actors take over the roles of all the people we met when they were young, the picture becomes marginally more affecting, possibly just because of time's passage.

Still, *The Promise* never becomes more than the exemplification of matters we already know. A chief fault is that Konrad has much more screen time than Sophie, though he is not greatly interesting, while Sophie is hardly developed at all. At the risk of sounding like a gender jockey, I point out that all of von Trotta's best work has been done with women. Here the most vivid female character is a Protestant cleric, who is subsidiary. Sophie is fairly null.

Von Trotta hasn't helped by adding (as she has done before) a slushy score—this time by Jürgen Knieper. But, as always, she directs with surety and ease. The frantic mob of foreigners in the Prague hotel lobby when the Soviet tanks arrive, the massive jubilation when the Wall comes down—von Trotta choreographs them excellently. Small touches, too, are fine: Konrad and Sophie in their Prague bedroom know that the Soviet tanks have arrived because the heavy rumbling in the street cracks the mirror on their wall.

This is to be a Jane Austen year filmwise (a term she would doubtless have loved). *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* are promised. **Persuasion** (Sony Pictures Classics) is here. The Austen season has nowhere to go but up.

The last of her novels is especially tough to handle because it deals with a romance that ends before the story begins and has its resumption just before the story ends. This is novelistic, not film, material. Nick Dear's screenplay understands the dilemma but can't solve it.

The burden is really on the woman who plays the leading role: she must hold us. This woman doesn't. We're told that Amanda Root, who plays Anne Elliot, is England's proudest acting hope since Emma Thompson. I hope not. She has pleasant eyes but a grim mouth—a countenance that doesn't invite speculation, a sensibility and technique that are just barely up to average. Root has played in a lot of classics on the London stage and in much British TV, but the results thereof are not apparent. The best we can assume is that Root will do better in more overtly active roles.

The most agreeable performances are by Corin Redgrave as Anne's father and Richard McCabe as the bereaved Captain Benwick. Otherwise, with its quaint villages and busy soirées, the film deserves the sometimes misused tag of

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Clockers. *Spike Lee wraps a fairly commonplace story of Brooklyn drug-dealing with pyrotechnical dazzle. Harvey Keitel, as a detective, and some young black actors shine in Lee's light. (Reviewed 10/2/95)* **Country Life.** *Michael Blakemore wrote, directed and acts in this version of* Uncle Vanya *set in the Australian outback. Some rewards, especially Sam Neill as "Astrov" and Kerry Fox as "Sonya." (9/11/95)* **Living in Oblivion.** *Tom DiCillo, a writer-director of low-budget features, wrote and directed this low-budget feature about his travails. Entertaining. (8/21 & 28/95)* **The Net.** *A mainstream thriller, but it does have some thrills. Sandra Bullock, as a computer analyst who gets in bad trouble by analyzing too well, is a star on the rise. (8/21 & 28/95)*—**SK**

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Masterpiece Theater—scenery and costume display interrupted by actors.

What would Jane have thought of transvestites? Who would dare to guess? Still, the thought occurred when, shortly after *Persuasion*, I saw **To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar** (Universal).

Unlike some others, I admire the title. It's attractively extravagant, and it suits the curlicued verbosity of the film's dialogue. If you don't know who Julie Newmar is—or Wong Foo, for that matter—that's part of the joke. I haven't kept up with all the transvestite pictures of recent years (I missed *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, for instance) but I certainly think that the three drag performances in this film are extremely skillful and extremely funny.

Patrick Swayze, Wesley Snipes and John Leguizamo—white, black and Latino, as if you hadn't noticed—are three queens who set out by car for Hollywood from New York to enter a drag contest whose prize will be awarded by Julie Newmar. Before they leave, Swayze steals a photo of Newmar from the wall of a Chinese restaurant, autographed as per the film's title. This photo becomes Swayze's precious icon.

The story and the adventures that befall the trio as they go west are so abysmal that the author's name is not even worth typing here. The director, Beeban Kidron, who made the snappy *Antonia and Jane* in England and the limp *Used People* here, at least helped her three stars in their courses. But what a ghastly script. What a way to reward three gifted performers who are really well up to their vaudeville. Suggestion: Why not give these three people a (greatly improved) sequel? •

An affair to remember.

Hannah and the Magician

By Richard Wolin

I.

In 1945 Thomas Mann gave a radio address called "On Germany and the Germans," in which he made the following lapidary observation: "There are not two Germanies, an evil and a good, but only one, which through devil's cunning, transformed its best into evil. . . ." For the author of "Mario and the Magician," this avowal represented a reversal. In his famous story he had shown a theater audience allow itself, against its better judgment, to be spellbound and seduced by a mountebank, to be putty in his hands, just as the Germans in the 1930s had been mesmerized by a lowly Austrian corporal parading as a messiah. By the end of the war, however, Mann realized that the horrors of Nazism could not be explained as a mass hypnosis. The problem was not just Hitler or "Hitlerism," but that a vast majority of Germans had consciously and willingly met their Führer halfway or more.

Hitler's seizure of power was not a *Betriebsunfall*, as postwar Germans were fond of saying, some kind of unforeseeable "industrial accident" that befell the nation from outside and left German traditions unscathed. Instead, the genocidal imperialism he unleashed upon Europe represented the consummation of significant trends of German history itself. Mann implored his countrymen not to go easy on themselves. Their task, he insisted, was to plumb the depths of their national patrimony, from Herder to Heidegger, in order to identify and to confront those specifically German delusions that caused the catastrophe.

Martin Heidegger hazarded his own account of Germany's fortunes. He was adamant, however, that what had

Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger
by Elzbieta Ettinger
(Yale University Press, 139 pp., $18.50)

Love and Saint Augustine
by Hannah Arendt
Edited and with an Interpretive Essay by
Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott & Judith Chelius Stark
(University of Chicago Press, 240 pp., $22.50)

Richard Wolin teaches European intellectual history at Rice University and is the author of *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (Columbia University Press). His new book, *Labyrinths: Explorations in the Critical History of Ideas* will be published by the University of Massachusetts Press this fall.

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happened was primarily a European phenomenon, and not "typically German." (His student Hannah Arendt shared this approach.) Of course, he was not completely wrong. Germany was far from alone in choosing a fascist or authoritarian solution to the political ills of the interwar period. But Heidegger was no ordinary analyst of the disaster. His narrative was false and delusory, for a simple reason: he had himself supported the Nazi regime, and so he designed a retrospective prophylaxis against his own words and deeds.

In Heidegger's view, the horrors of Nazism were merely a monumental instance of the "forgetting of Being," for which the Germans bore no special responsibility. All of Western civilization, he believed, had similarly strayed from primal philosophical truth. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, which appeared in 1953, Heidegger even insisted that German fascism was unique among Western political movements in that, for one shining moment, it had come close to mastering the vexatious "relationship between planetary technology and modern man." Therein lay the "inner truth and greatness of National Socialism." The tragedy was to be found in the intellectual limitations of the Nazis: "These people were far too limited in their thinking." Pathetically, Heidegger was left to replay in his own mind "what might have been" had Hitler heeded not the call of the party hacks but the call of Being, as it was relayed by the sage of Freiburg. With a little ontological attentiveness, Nazism might have realized its genuine potential.

Hannah Arendt set forth her account of the cataclysm in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which appeared in 1951. This was the work that gained her an international reputation as a political thinker. It is a work of brilliance, but its learning is often ostentatious and its argument often ponderous: it is, in short, quintessential Arendt. Readers were dazzled by her thinking, but this bedazzlement left a considerable degree of perplexity in its wake. Could such a masterful whole be wrong, in its concepts or its details? And, if the details were inaccurate, what did that say about the plausibility of the whole? In the third of the book called "Anti-Semitism," Arendt's accounts of the life of court Jews, of the evils of parvenu Jewish bankers, of the Proustian salon, of Disraeli's Jewish chauvinism are all vivid, but what precisely do these lurid and keenly observed details have to do with the phenomenon to be explained, that is, with the advent of totalitarianism? The limits of the "European" approach to the problem should have been plain.

THE YOUNG HANNAH ARENDT BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Hannah Arendt's contribution was established in part by her identification of her subject. She had put her finger on the most important innovation of twentieth-century political life. She was among the first to recognize that totalitarianism, as a form of rule, was a *novum*, a genuine innovation in the history of politics. The regimes of Stalin and Hitler differed in kind, and not merely in degree, from traditional tyrannies, which generally left a compliant civil population in domestic peace. Not so these modern dictatorships, which, in keeping with a spirit of total mobilization, demanded the active complicity of their subjects. Arendt captured these aspects of the totalitarian experience as no one had before.

But there were glaring weaknesses in her analysis, and they left scholars fit to be tied. Her work was divided into three main headings: anti-Semitism, imperialism and totalitarianism. She scorned the traditional notion of causation in history—the homely idea that certain historical circumstances were produced by identifiable antecedent factors—as overly deterministic. Instead, in the tradition of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, she held that in the natural sciences we seek to "explain," but in history we seek to "understand." Thus, she characterized anti-Semitism and imperialism as "elements" that came together or "crystallized" in the form of modern totalitarian practice. But what was it, exactly, that actually gave rise to this mysterious process of crystallization? On this score, her account remained murky. There were numerous countries, after all, in which anti-Semitism or imperialism or both were prominent, and yet nothing resembling totalitarianism emerged.

Arendt's discussion suffered from a massive imbalance. The part on "Totalitarianism" dealt almost exclusively with the theory and practice of National Socialism. The discussion of Stalinism was appended as a virtual afterthought. Moreover, whereas National Socialism and its horrendous crimes would be inconceivable without anti-Semitism, which was the cornerstone of Nazi ideology, in the worldview of Stalinism it played a negligible role. If, in one of the two major historical instances of totalitarian rule, one of Arendt's essential "elements" is largely absent, what kind of positive explanatory power does her model retain?

Moreover, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* revealed that Arendt had a Jewish problem, that is, a problem with her own Jewish identity. In her account, the lines between the oppressors and the oppressed were subtly blurred. The Jews were faulted for being an apolitical people, as if that were a lot they had freely

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chosen. Arendt concluded that in many instances the Jews had foolishly brought historical persecution upon themselves. Jewish arrogance—in the form of the myth of the chosen people and the ideals of apartness and exclusiveness in which it found historical expression—played a prominent role in her narrative. Was she saying that the Jews deserved their fate? Of course not, except in the sense in which the protagonist of a Greek tragedy can be said to have deserved his or her fate. The theoretical groundwork for some of the uglier features of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* had already been established.

In the late 1920s Arendt's Jewish problem came to the fore, just as it would for so many other highly assimilated German Jews. It came as a great blow to many of them that, for all their ardent attempts at acculturation, they remained, in the eyes of their German acquaintances, more Jews than Germans. Many discovered their own Jewishness for the first time in the acid bath of anti-Semitism. Suddenly they were forced to confront the fact that the lives they were leading had been predicated on an illusion; and this disillusionment was especially bitter for well-educated Jews, who had believed that *Bildung* was the great equalizer, their admission ticket to the privileges of German society. Arendt's life and upbringing fit squarely into this mold. She, too, had believed that if she imbibed a sufficient quantity of *Geist* the doors to German society would magically open. As she told an interviewer in 1964: "As a child I did not know that I was Jewish.... The word 'Jew' was never mentioned at home when I was a child. I first met up with it through anti-Semitic remarks ... from children on the street. After that I was, so to speak, 'enlightened.' "

But Hannah Arendt did not only have a Jewish problem. She also had a Heidegger problem. And they were, in many respects, intertwined with each other.

II.

The love affair of Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt, which took place in the 1920s, when he was her teacher and she was his student, has been public knowledge for years. But not in its details; and so there has been a great deal of speculation about the personal and intellectual consequences of the liaison. In her important and laconic book, Elzbieta Ettinger puts all speculation to rest. Here are the essentials of the story, of this last tango in Weimar. Through a careful perusal of the Heidegger-Arendt correspondence, which was for a long time unavailable to scholars (out

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THE MORAL ANIMAL

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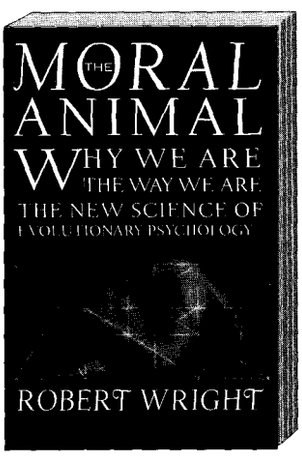
by Robert Wright



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of respect for the living, especially Heidegger's widow, who died recently), Ettinger has faithfully reconstructed the ups and downs of their libidinal entanglement. She cites generously from Arendt's letters to Heidegger, many of which are composed in the effusive style of high German romanticism. Heidegger's letters she merely paraphrases, in accordance, one presumes, with the strictures of his estate.

An entanglement it certainly was. It began in 1925. Heidegger was 35, a father of two, who had already acquired the reputation of a philosophical prodigy, the heir apparent to the phenomenological movement begun by his mentor Edmund Husserl. He had turned to philosophy and the university after rejecting theology and the church, but he had retained a sacerdotal conception of himself. He was known colloquially as the magician of Messkirch. (Messkirch was his birthplace.) He wore knickerbockers and a Black Forest peasant coat of dark cloth to enhance his aura of authenticity. He drew students from all over Germany. They flocked to his lectures, and to thwart the mob he would schedule his lectures at the crack of dawn. The German philosopher Karl Löwith, a former student and intimate of Heidegger, described the seductions of Heidegger's pedagogy.

> He was a small dark man who knew how to cast a spell insofar as he could make disappear what he had a moment before presented. His lecture technique consisted in building up an edifice of ideas which he then proceeded to tear down, presenting the spellbound listeners with a riddle and then leaving them empty-handed. This ability to cast a spell at times had very considerable consequences: it attracted more or less psychopathic personality types, and, after three years of guessing at riddles, one student took her own life.

Arendt, in 1925, was a frail 18-year-old from the East Prussian city of Königsberg, the city of Kant. She hailed from an upper-crust, assimilated Jewish family, but at an early age she experienced her share of hard knocks. Her father died a prolonged, horrible death from syphilis in 1913, and a few years later her mother remarried. Overnight the precocious Hannah acquired two half-sisters with whom she had little in common. (One of them would commit suicide in the early 1930s.) Her sense of displacement was acute. In an impassioned youthful tract portentously titled "The Shadows," she would lament her "helpless, betrayed youth."

Heidegger met her in Marburg, at the university, in the fall of 1924. A few months later, the affair began. Heidegger could have been sacked from his teaching position had the lovers been found out. He had already acquired a considerable reputation, in the Socratic tradition, as a seducer of youth. His wife, Elfride, was notoriously jealous, especially of the women students who were mesmerized by her husband. She was also a notorious anti-Semite. In the 1920s, she once suggested to Günther Anders, who was to become Arendt's first husband, that he enlist in a local Nazi youth group. When Anders replied that he was Jewish, Frau Heidegger turned away in disgust.

Arendt and Heidegger were an unlikely couple. She was the fetching young Jewess from a Baltic cosmopolitan milieu, he was the Schwarzwald-bred lapsed Catholic and proud provincial. According to Ettinger, Arendt's exotic Eastern features "stood in stark contrast to the Teutonic Brunhildas he was close to: his mother and his wife." In one of his more fatuous texts of the 1930s, "Why Do We Stay in the Provinces?", Heidegger delivered an encomium to the joys of provincial life that reads today like self-parody: "Let us stop all this condescending familiarity and sham concern for Volk-character and let us learn to take seriously that simple, rough existence up there." More often than not, such justifications of simple, Volkisch existence and jibes at cosmopolitanism went hand-in-hand with a crude anti-Semitism; and in this way, too, Heidegger lives up to the stereotype.

According to the testimony of Heidegger's friend Heinrich Petzet, the magician of Messkirch felt ill at ease with big-city life, "and this was especially true of that mundane spirit of Jewish circles, which is at home in the metropolitan centers of the West." In 1933, in his infamous rectoral address at Freiburg University, he was at pains to eulogize the "forces that are rooted in the soil and blood of the [German] Volk." A recently discovered letter of reference from 1929 shows him lamenting the rampant "Jewification" (*Verjudung*) of the German spirit. And this was four years before Hitler came to power; Heidegger's Nazism was not a matter of opportunism.

There are those who have pointed to the dalliance with Arendt as evidence of Heidegger's "ecumenicism," even of a hidden philo-Semitic streak. Perhaps; but this is a man who had no great compunction about serving on the board of the Academy for German Law with the likes of Julius Streicher, chief purveyor of Nazi anti-Semitic pornography and the editor of *Der Stürmer*. The board's president, Hans Frank, was the future German governor of Poland. The credo of the organization was to re-establish the basis of German law in accordance with the principles of "Race, State, Führer, Blood, Authority." And Heidegger labored in the company of such men until 1936, that is, a good two years after he had resigned his Freiburg rectorship. By then he had severed ties with most of his former Jewish students. The winds had shifted away from "ecumenicism," and traces of his philo-Semitism were nowhere to be found.

It appears that Heidegger's relationship with Arendt, while not without tenderness, was profoundly exploitative. It was he who had initiated the affair. She was a vulnerable and impressionable young woman awestruck by this up-and-coming personification of *Geist*. Ettinger artfully reconstructs the prehistory of their involvement.

> That Hannah Arendt was drawn to [Heidegger] is not surprising. Given the powerful influence he exerted on his students it was almost inevitable. Neither her past—that of a fatherless, searching youngster—nor her vulnerable, melancholic nature prepared her to withstand Heidegger's determined effort to win her heart. She shared the insecurity of many assimilated Jews who were still uncertain about their place, still harboring doubts about themselves. By choosing her as his beloved, Heidegger fulfilled for Hannah the dream of generations of German Jews, going back to such pioneers of assimilation as Rahel Varnhagen.

The two would meet clandestinely, usually in Arendt's student garret, at Heidegger's urging, in accordance with the demands of his schedule. Arendt was passive, pliable, willing. Inevitably, the demands of secrecy became confusing and burdensome to both. About a year after the affair had begun, Arendt resolved to transfer to another university. She thought of the move as an act of sacrifice on Heidegger's behalf. As she would explain to him in a letter, she reached this decision "because of my love for you, to make nothing more difficult than it already was." But it seems that Heidegger was pressuring her to leave, in the hope that they could continue their surreptitious rendezvous under less stressful circumstances—that is, under circumstances in which the likelihood of his being discovered would be diminished. To facilitate this end, Heidegger arranged for Arendt to study with his friend Karl Jaspers in Heidelberg.

Arendt was profoundly wounded by Heidegger. It was as though he had repaid her intimacy and trust by banishing her. In Heidelberg, she boldly refused to provide him with her new address. Heidegger sent Hans Jonas, one

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of his students and later an important philosopher, to seek her out, and their trysts continued for another two years at various whistle-stops along the Marburg-Heidelberg railway line. (Apparently Heidegger's humble origins forever impeded a sense of chivalry.) Then, shortly after Heidegger received his permanent appointment at Freiburg in 1928, he abruptly broke off the affair. In response to the bitter news, Arendt concluded her ensuing letter with the melodramatic premonition: "And with God's will/I will love you more after death." But her threat was never carried out. A year later she married Günther Anders, formerly Günther Stern, a Berlin journalist and an associate of Brecht. (After the war Anders achieved renown with his writings on the "obsolescence of man" in the nuclear age.)

To the end, however, Arendt would remain in the magician's thrall. Years later, Heidegger would confide to Arendt that she had been "the passion of his life." In 1971, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, she wrote in *The New York Review of Books*, in flagrant defiance of the truth, that he had escaped "from the reality of the Gestapo cellars and the torture hells of the early concentration camps into ostensibly more significant regions." In 1974, a year before she died, she wrote to him in reverent and somewhat sublimated language: "No one can deliver a lecture the way you do, nor did anyone before you."

III.

In 1928, Arendt wrote a dissertation under Karl Jaspers's supervision on Augustine's concept of love. The essay was an orthodox phenomenological reconsideration of Augustine's doctrines. In fidelity to the training she had received from Heidegger and Jaspers, the twin demigods of German *Existenzphilosophie*, existential questions occupied pride of place in the study: the nature of "limit-situations," the conversion to authenticity, the confrontation with human mortality, the call of conscience, and so on. Above all, Arendt addressed the quandary of how one could reconcile a theory of neighborly love with Augustine's conviction that an authentic relation to the world must be thoroughly mediated by one's relationship to God.

With this focus, Arendt attempted to work through the problem of "Being-with-others," a central category of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which appeared in 1927, as it pertained to the theories of Augustine. Augustine's "conversion" to Christianity bore pronounced affinities with the concerns of German existentialism: it resonated in Heidegger's notion of "authentic resolve" as well as in Jaspers's concept of the "limit-situation." In a post-Nietzschean non-theological spirit, however, both thinkers had proceeded to translate this pathos into immanent terms. For Heidegger, it evoked the isolated individual's authenticity in confronting his own nothingness or death. Thus, in the early 1920s a "protestant" Heidegger lectured extensively on Paul, Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard. In this existential-philosophical context, "God" became a stand-in for the unfathomable mysteries of human "temporality"—"the kind of Being which dominates [man's] *temporal sojourn in the world*, and does so through and through," as Heidegger wrote in *Being and Time*. God's absence pointed to the somber condition of irremediable human "finitude." In this way Heidegger revised and secularized the Christian doctrine of original sin as the "fallen" nature of human existence, our dwelling in inauthenticity.

Arendt published her dissertation in 1929 to mixed reviews. Theologians were put off by the apparent arrogance of her unwillingness to take the existing literature into account. In truth, the book is the work of a disciple, narrowly textual in orientation and focus, devoid of the penchant for originality at any cost that would later characterize Arendt's work.

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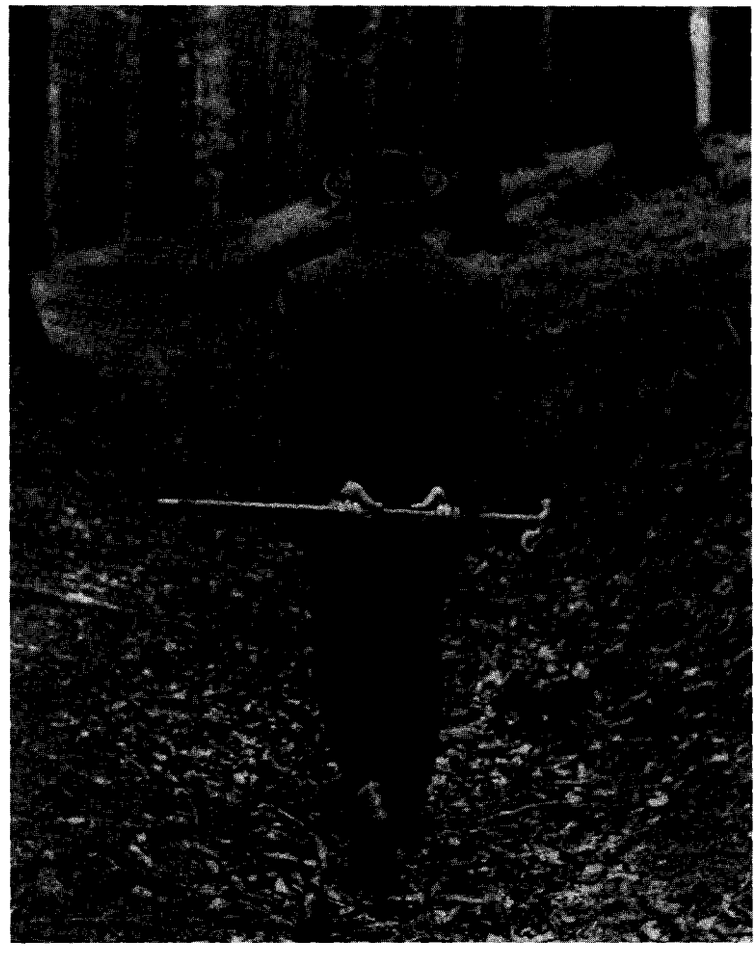
Some of her later concerns are dimly foreshadowed, such as her preoccupation with "natality," her term for the unprecedented novelty of acts of political founding, as in ancient Rome and the American Constitution. More interestingly, the work stands as a testimonial to the delusions of assimilationism. It was written when a Jewish intellectual in Germany could still entertain hopes of a university career in the conservative (if not reactionary) milieu of the German academic mandarins. Although the university situation had improved somewhat in the Weimar republic, it remained more or less the same baronial system that had denied a full appointment, predominantly on the grounds of race, to the great sociologist Georg Simmel until two years before his death in 1918.

The editors of *Love and Saint Augustine* have appended an interpretive essay equal in length to the text itself. In it they make an elaborate case for the centrality of this slender *Jugendschrift* to Arendt's work as a whole. They fail to persuade. There is an obvious and profound obstacle that stands in the way of such an interpretation. The later Arendt is known, quite rightly, as a philosopher of "worldliness," a standpoint that is difficult to reconcile with an Augustinian orientation. And this contradiction turns out to account for one of the main weaknesses of the book itself. For Arendt is at pains to develop a notion of community or neighborly love in the context of a doctrine for which everything "merely worldly" is consigned a priori to the realm of "temptation." Thus, love of one's neighbor can never be intrinsic or "for its own sake," for such love would be sinful. Instead, neighborly love must always be mediated by a prior and all-encompassing relationship to God. And yet, as Arendt herself avows, "This very faith will thrust the individual in isolation from his fellow individuals in the divine presence.... Faith takes man out of the world, that is, out of a certain community of men, the *civitas terrena*."

The notion of community that Arendt discovers in Augustine is rather morbid and oblique, drenched in a veil of theological tears. It is the mournful community of the fallen, the sinful who can trace their lineage back to the first sinner in Eden. As Arendt herself expresses these thoughts: "Humanity's common descent is its common share in original sin. This sinfulness, conferred with birth, necessarily attaches to everyone. There is no escape from it. It is the same in all people. The equality of the situation means that all are sinful." It is odd to find a secular, enlightened, assimilated Jew led by existential phenomenology to an acceptance of original sin. But it was Arendt herself, in fact, who later articulated the intellectual shortcoming of this lugubrious theological notion of community and its difference from her mature thought. In *The Human Condition* (1958), she argued against the forlorn "worldlessness" of the early Christian *civitas dei* as it was exemplified by the work of Augustine:

> To find a bond between people strong enough to replace the world was the main political task of early Christian philosophy and it was Augustine who proposed to found not only Christian brotherhood but all human relationships on charity.... The bond of charity between people, while it is incapable of founding a public realm of its own, is quite adequate to the main Christian principle of worldlessness and admirably fit to carry a group of essentially worldless people through the world.



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MARTIN HEIDEGGER IN THE BLACK FOREST

Arendt proceeded to contrast the debilities of early Christian "worldlessness" with the more genuinely human achievements of "plurality" and "publicness."

In Arendt's next book, a study of the eighteenth-century Jewess Rahel Varnhagen, she would produce withering criticisms of the phantasms of "introspection" and the delusions of assimilationism. And in this book, too, her repudiation of the thematic framework of the Augustine study could hardly be more explicit. In Augustine, after all, it is only by means of introspection—"the turn to the inner voice of conscience," as he puts it—that we begin to abandon the temptations of worldliness in favor of the eternal life of salvation. In the Varnhagen book, however, Arendt came to associate introspection with a type of meretricious and self-deluded worldlessness. In her eyes, it became not a spiritual instrument but a form of psychic denial, preserving a sensation of inner autonomy at the cost of a fatal indifference to reality. It represents, indeed, the ultimate form of narcissistic self-deception: "Lying can obliterate the outside event which introspection has already converted into a purely psychic factor. Lying takes up the heritage of introspection, sums it up, and makes a reality of the freedom that introspection has won."

Following the traumatic end of her affair with Heidegger, Arendt bid an unsentimental adieu to German philosophy. She must have wondered what role her Jewishness played in their parting. As the German republic verged on collapse, many things must have been confused in her mind. German philosophy, which she had once assumed to be her calling, now seemed fully implicated in the rise of fascism. On a more personal

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level, she was shocked at the alacrity with which the leading representatives of German culture had suddenly metamorphosed into convinced Nazis and passionate anti-Semites. In 1933, after Heidegger became rector of Freiburg University and assumed responsibility for instituting anti-Jewish decrees, and about the same time that Husserl would complain in a letter of his disappointment at Heidegger's "increasingly strong anti-Semitism," Arendt sent him an especially accusatory letter. And in an interview in 1964, she described her disillusionment with German intellectuals unequivocally:

> The problem ... was not what our enemies did but what our friends did. In the wave of *Gleichschaltung* [the total regimentation of German society under Hitler], which was relatively voluntary—in any case, not yet under the pressure of terror—it was as if an empty space formed around one. I lived in an intellectual milieu, but I also knew other people. And among intellectuals *Gleichschaltung* was the rule, so to speak. But not among the others. And I never forgot that. I left Germany dominated by the idea—of course somewhat exaggerated: Never again! I shall never again get involved in any kind of intellectual business. I want nothing to do with that lot.

After Ettinger's revelations, it is hard not to believe that those words were written with Heidegger in mind.

Arendt's rude awakening to her Jewish identity led to a dramatic shift in her intellectual interests. Almost as soon as she had finished the dissertation on Augustine, she began research on her study of Rahel Varnhagen, the *maîtresse de salon* in Enlightenment Berlin. She pointedly subtitled her book "the Life of a Jewess." In the light of what we now know about her star-crossed romance with Heidegger, the profoundly autobiographical nature of the Varnhagen book becomes even more clear. Varnhagen was a Jewish woman who had for a long time struggled to keep her Jewish identity at a distance with the rationalizations of *Innerlichkeit*; but in the end she learned to reconcile herself to her origins, to her marginality as a Jewish woman in the midst of an unaccepting and at times actively hostile Gentile society. Her dying words, as recounted by Arendt, were: "The thing which all my life seemed to me the greatest shame, which was the misery and misfortune of my life—having been born a Jewess—this I should on no account now wish to have missed." In a similar reaction to the experience of anti-Semitism, Arendt began to affirm her own Jewishness following the rise of Nazism. In exile in France during the 1930s, she worked with Youth Aliyah to facilitate the relocation of Jewish youth to Palestine. In 1935, she herself brought a group of children from France to Palestine (she emigrated to the United States in 1941 and became an American citizen in 1950).

A widely accepted Enlightenment precept held that the Jews, a backward and uncultured people, could gain acceptance only when they shed their Jewishness, an ungainly atavism. According to Arendt, the Prussian Jews of the day suffered from a collective false consciousness: "Jews did not even want to be emancipated as a whole; all they wanted was to escape from Jewishness, as individuals if possible." In her struggle to gain acceptance in a semi-enlightened Prussian society, Varnhagen had decided on a solution that was fairly common among Jewish parvenus of the day: baptism and intermarriage. She found herself an eminently suitable match in the person of Count Karl von Finckenstein, an occasional visitor to her salon. Soon the two were betrothed. Varnhagen's expectations for a new life as Countess von Finckenstein were high, when suddenly and unexpectedly, their engagement fell through. His family, it seems, disapproved of the bride; and he felt ill at ease in the bourgeois ambiance of the salon, where origins counted for naught. (In 1814, Varnhagen was baptized, and

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married the Prussian diplomat Karl August Varnhagen von Ense.)

How deeply Arendt must have identified with her protagonist! Rahel was an archetype of the Jewish "pariah," a term (following Max Weber) that would become the leitmotif for Arendt's understanding of the Diaspora experience. (By defining the Jew as essentially a "pariah," of course, Arendt unwittingly revealed how deeply her understanding of Jewish life was determined by non-Jewish perceptions.) The parallels with her own affair with the Other, which also ended in an excruciatingly abrupt parting of the ways, must have struck her as uncanny.

But there is another aspect of the Varnhagen book that merits scrutiny in the light of what we know about Arendt's aggrieved relations with Heidegger. It opens with a remarkable, sustained polemic against the delusions of German romanticism: specifically, against the perils of a sensibility in which the values of "inwardness" have been elevated to the status of the be-all and end-all of human existence.

This attack on the fantasies and the fallacies of *Geist* contains some of the most heartfelt and powerful writing in Arendt's entire oeuvre:

> Sentimental remembering is the best method for completely forgetting one's own destiny. It presupposes that the present itself is instantly converted into a "sentimental" past.... The present always first rises up out of memory, and it is immediately drawn into the inner self, where everything is eternally present, and converted back into potentiality. Thus the power and autonomy of the soul are secured. Secured at the price of truth, it must be recognized, for without reality shared with other human beings, truth loses all meaning. Introspection and its hybrids engender *mendacity*.

Thus the study of Varnhagen represents a steadfast and uncompromising indictment of Arendt's own youthful hopes. The collapse of her affair with Heidegger and the rise of Nazism must have been maddeningly conflated in her own mind. And all these dilemmas must have sharpened for her in May, 1933. It was then that she learned of Heidegger's sensational entry into the Nazi Party (on the official day of party unity, no less) as well as of his pro-Nazi rectoral address, which concluded with a blusterous romantic ode to the "Glory and Greatness of the new [German] Awakening." But the worst was still to come. Later that same year the deluded "Rector-Führer"—this was Heidegger's new job description following the Nazi seizure of power—would conclude his speeches with rhetorical flourishes such as this: "Let not doctrines and ideas be the rules of your Being. The Führer alone is the present and future German reality and its law." And this would be punctuated by "a threefold *Sieg Heil*!" Is it any wonder that, thirteen years later, in her first public utterances about Heidegger's Nazi involvements, in the pages of *Partisan Review*, she would contend that Heidegger's "whole mode of behavior has exact parallels in German Romanticism"? He was, she wrote, "the last (we hope) romantic."

Heidegger's sentence for having collaborated with the Nazi regime was a harsh one. He was stripped of his *venia legenda*, or right to teach, and banned without a pension from university life. At the relatively young age of 56, he was virtually a broken man. The humiliation of the situation—the French occupation authorities identified him as a "*Nazi typique*" and proceeded to commandeer his Freiburg home, including his personal library—caused a mental collapse requiring two months' hospitalization. And in the university de-Nazification hearings, it was a letter by Karl Jaspers that tipped the scales. In Jaspers's view, Heidegger's philosophy was in essence "unfree, dictatorial, and incapable of communication." Should he be allowed to continue lecturing, the "pedagogical effects [would be] disastrous." "Such a teacher," Jaspers concluded, "in my opinion cannot be placed before the youth of today."

IV.

In 1950, in Germany, Arendt and Heidegger were joyfully reconciled. The reunion transformed her from one of his staunchest critics into one of his staunchest defenders. At the time Heidegger was still banned from German university life. His reputation damaged as a result of his notoriety as a Nazi collaborator, he stood in desperate need of a credible publicist and ambassador. In Ettinger's words, "Hannah fit the bill.... Most important, she was a renowned Jew, and therefore her support could help neutralize the persistent accusations of Heidegger's anti-Semitism."

Arendt described their first contact in nearly two decades rhapsodically: "That evening and that [next] morning are a confirmation of a whole life. In fact, a never-expected confirmation." She became Heidegger's de facto American agent, diligently overseeing contracts and translations of his books. One of the more humorous episodes in Ettinger's well-crafted narrative tells of Heidegger, old and strapped for cash, contemplating the sale of the manuscript of *Being and Time*. Unworldly in the base matters of *Geld*, to whom would he turn for advice? To a Jew, naturally. And Arendt dutifully complied, consulting an expert at the Library of Congress and offering detailed counsel.

And yet, in her correspondence with Jaspers after the war but before her reunion with Heidegger, Arendt's denunciations of her old master had been fierce. Insofar as Rector-Führer Heidegger's refusal to allow Husserl, who was a Jew, to use the university library "nearly killed him [Husserl], I cannot but regard Heidegger as a potential murderer." His lectures on Nietzsche she derogated as "absolutely horrible [and] chatty." And she continued: "That life in Todtnauberg [in the Black Forest], this railing against civilization, and writing *Sein* with a *y* is in reality a kind of mousehole into which he withdrew, assuming with good reason that the only people he will have to see are pilgrims filled with admiration for him; no one is likely to climb 1200 meters just to make a scene." Even in 1946, in her essay in *Partisan Review*, she expressed a low opinion of certain aspects of Heidegger's philosophy: "Heidegger's ontological approach hides a rigid functionalism in which Man appears only as a conglomerate of modes of Being, which is in principle arbitrary, since no concept of Man determines his modes of Being."

And then, in 1950, her tone changed completely. Thereafter, according to Ettinger, "Above all, she did what she could to whitewash his Nazi past." Thus, in her contribution to a *Festschrift* commemorating Heidegger's eightieth birthday, Arendt went out of her way in a long footnote to dispute any essential relation between Heidegger's thought and his support of Hitler. She contended that "Heidegger himself corrected his own 'error' more quickly and more radically than many of those who later sat in judgment over him—he took greater risks than were usual in German literary and university life during that period." Those are all claims that we now know to be false.

Gone were the impassioned condemnations of romantic inwardness and those German delusions according to which the world could remain a hovel so long as the thinker's palace of ideas remained intact. Gone, too, was any trace of her earlier critical portrayal of Heidegger as "the last (we hope) romantic." Instead she copped a plea on behalf of her embattled mentor. In an abrupt turnabout, she now claimed that Nazism was a "gutter-born" phenomenon, and as such it had nothing to do with the life of the mind. According to this new interpretation, the hallowed realm of *Kultur*, on which Arendt had hung the dreams of

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her youth, bore no responsibility for the German catastrophe. And to her, of course, it was Heidegger who was the living embodiment of that realm and those dreams.

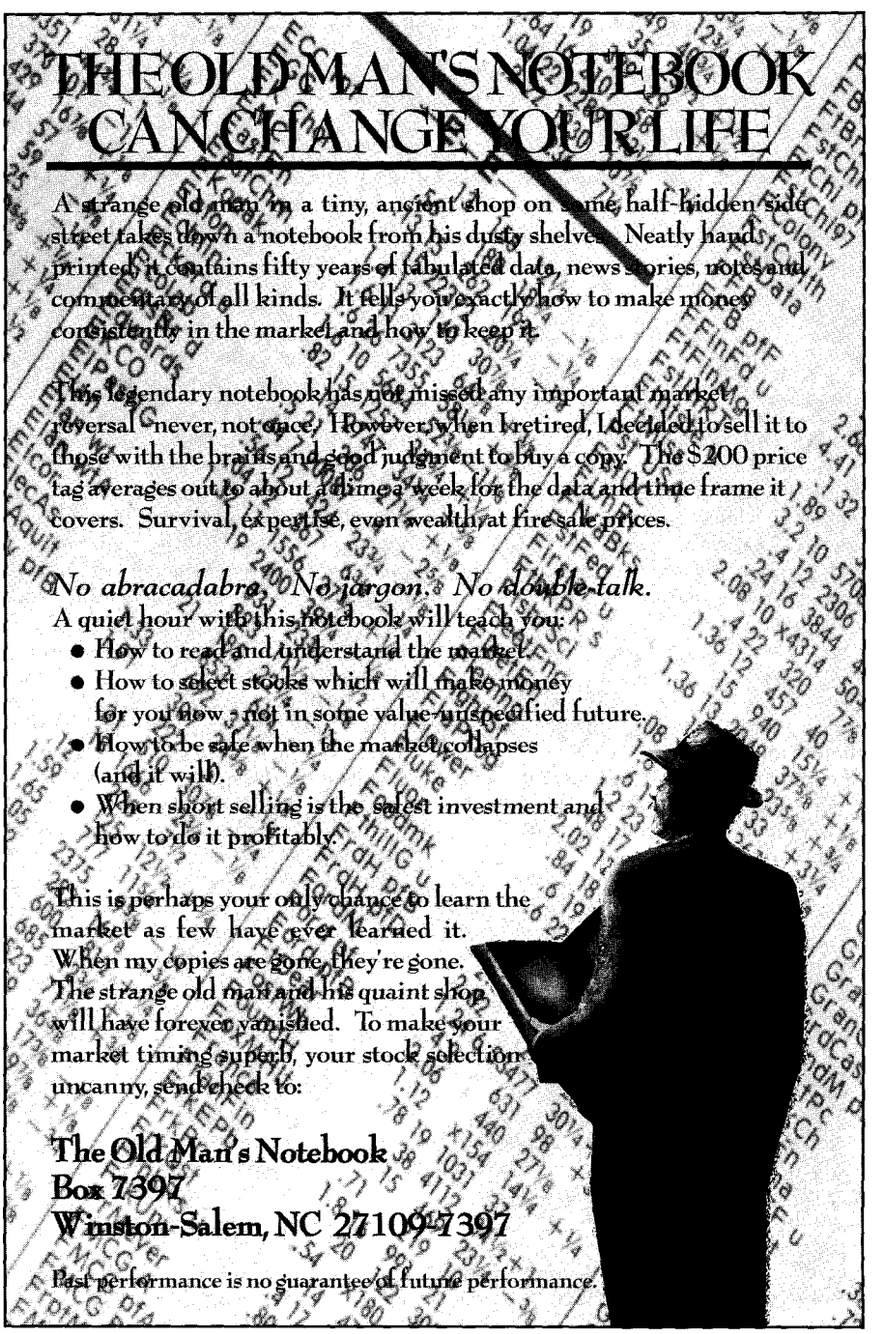
And how did Heidegger repay such blind devotion? Selfishly, of course. True to form, he remained incapable of acknowledging the fact that his former student and mistress had blossomed into an intellectual of world stature. When the German translation of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* appeared, Heidegger responded with months of icy silence. And when, a few years later, Arendt proudly sent him the German edition of *The Human Condition*, which she had wanted to dedicate to Heidegger ("it owes you just about everything in every regard"), she commented ruefully in a letter to Jaspers:

> I know that he finds unbearable that my name appears in public, that I write books, etc. Always, I have been virtually lying to him about myself, pretending the books, the name, did not exist, and I couldn't, so to speak, count to three, unless it concerned the interpretations of his works. Then, he would be quite pleased if it turned out that I can count to three and sometimes to four. But suddenly I became bored with the cheating and got a punch in the nose.

In 1963, Arendt published *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. She never really recovered from the scandal that resulted from the passage in which she implied that the behavior of Jewish Council officials was comparable to the behavior of the Nazi executioners. Steering clear of the complexities of that black hour, Arendt contended that "this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story." She went on to discuss "the totality of the moral collapse the Nazis caused in respectable European society—not only in Germany but in almost all countries, not only among the persecutors but also among the victims." She even referred to the extraordinary German-Jewish thinker and leader Leo Baeck as the "Jewish Führer" (a remark that she had the good sense to delete from the book's second edition). And in the old tone of German-Jewish arrogance, she described Eichmann's Israeli prosecutor as "a Galician Jew [who] ... speaks without periods or commas ... like a diligent schoolboy who wants to show off everything he knows" and accused him of a "ghetto mentality"—the ultimate slight from a high-born Jew.

To this astounding lack of empathy for the victims Arendt added her famous pronouncement that the evil that the Nazis inflicted on the Jews was, for the man on the witness stand, who was second only to Himmler and Heydrich in responsibility for the Final Solution, "banal." Accepting Eichmann's own denials at face value, she argued that he possessed little awareness of his own culpability. She insinuated that there was no "intentionality" to his crimes: Eichmann was merely a cog in a massive bureaucratic machine in which wrongdoing had become the norm. The most forceful accusation that she could bring against him and other Nazis was that of "thoughtlessness."

Many of the *Judenrat* figures discussed by Arendt were far from saintly; and yet her judgment was morally insensitive and historically false. Her argument represented an ugly equation of the executed with the executioners. She seemed unaware that her claims amounted to a repudiation of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: in the earlier book she had insisted upon the radicality, and not the banality, of this variety of evil, and she had shown that Nazism, far from being a system based on "thoughtlessness," was a creation of ideology. She never understood what all the fuss was about. Instead, she prattled about the conspiracy against her on the part of the "Jewish Establishment." She attributed her bad press in Israel to the fact that those pulling the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strings in the Jewish homeland were of the same Ashkenazi ilk as those who had served on the Jewish Councils and collaborated with the Nazis.

By showing that Arendt was busy exculpating Heidegger even as she was busy inculpating the victims of Nazism, Ettinger's book casts an even darker shadow over *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The tone of that book seems even uglier. Arendt appears to have been raising herself above those Eastern European Jewish ghetto-dwellers who willingly cooperated in being collectively led to the slaughter. She, after all, had imbibed, and now exemplified, certain higher European traditions; and she had studied with, and loved, the great modern tribune of *Geist*. Could it have been those old loyalties that in some way led her to purvey such calumnies about the Jews in the Eichmann book? Could the offensive passages of the book have been meant somehow to absolve the magician of Messkirch of his crimes by showing that his victims were also guilty?

V.

In 1933, in response to Jaspers's query as to how he could consider someone as uncultured as Hitler fit to rule Germany, Heidegger exclaimed: "It's not a question of culture. Look at his beautiful hands!" This was political existentialism. Heidegger was proclaiming that the place of reason with respect to power is limited, or that it has no place at all. Action and authenticity were what mattered.

Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger is important for the biographical light that it sheds upon the development of Arendt's thought. For the sensational story of her relationship with Heidegger matters, in the end, if it instructs us about the nature of her ideas. And alas, it does. Heidegger's lover and disciple went on to become the ultimate political existentialist.

In her political thought, Arendt was what might be called a left Heideggerian. In many respects, she transposed the revolutionary pathos that Heidegger praised in right-wing revolutionary movements to the ends of the political left. She identified profoundly with the experience of the workers' council movement in the Russian Revolution, the Bavarian *Raterepublik* of 1919, the Hungarian uprising of 1956. And this allegiance led her to undervalue the workings of parliamentary process and to overvalue the glories of revolutionary activism (with the notable exception of the French Revolution, whose content she viewed as primarily social rather than political). Their differences notwithstanding, Heidegger and Arendt sought to surmount the mediocrity and the routine of modern mass society by embracing the virtues of "action." And, owing to their common mistrust of the political capacities of ordinary men and women, the political thought of both was profoundly undemocratic.

In Heidegger's case, the concrete historical outcome of this taste for "revolutionary action" is well-known. Conversely, his disillusionment with Nazism is traceable to the moment when the "movement" abandoned its original revolutionary élan, on June 30, 1934, when Ernst Röhm and his followers were purged during the "night of the long knives." Heidegger's theoretical justifications for his engagement with National Socialism are of more than historical interest, insofar as his philosophical "radicalism" came to exercise a profound influence on the mature political thought of Arendt.

In his lectures following Hitler's seizure of power, Heidegger ardently defended the *Führerprinzip*, the principle of the leader. As he taught in his lectures on Hölderlin, "the true and only Führer points by virtue of his Being to the realm of the demigods." He believed that democracy was responsible for the downfall of the ancient *polis*. And it went almost without saying that "The true is not for everyman but only for the strong." The spirit of his political thinking was vulgar-Nietzschean: in stark contrast to the social leveling that was characteristic of the modern age, he adduced the ancient Greeks, for whom the principles of "rank and domination" occupied pride of place.

His justification of revolutionary activism is most clearly found in his mid-1930s panegyric to "the great creators," the cadre of authentic "leader types"—poets, thinkers, statesmen—who stand in a privileged relation to "Being." With the violence of their works, they are charged with the task of redeeming the mass of humankind from the utter nihilism of the historical present. An existential vanguard, they are the shock-troops of Being. In Heidegger's own words, they are "the violent ones ... who use force to become pre-eminent in historical Being as creators, as men of action." In a lecture course in 1934, which has been recently published, Heidegger provides a more concrete definition of authentic historical "action":

> Nature has its history. But then Negroes would also have history. Or does nature then have no history? It can enter into the past as something transitory, but not everything that fades away enters into history. When an airplane's propeller turns, then nothing actually "occurs." Conversely, when the same airplane takes the Führer to Mussolini, then history occurs.

Arendt would have recoiled in disgust from such statements. And yet she found a use for this kind of revolutionary vitalism. In her own thinking about politics she preserved Heidegger's emphasis on authenticity and elitism. "Only the vulgar will condescend to derive their pride from what they have done," she wrote in *The Human Condition*; and she continued (quoting Isak Dinesen) that "'the great people themselves are judged by what they are.'" Arendt lamented the loss in the modern world of "the shining glory of immortal fame which may follow the great deed." Like her mentor, she suffered from *polis* envy, from the tendency to view modern political life as a precipitous fall from the glories of a mythologized Periclean peak.

In Arendt's view, "The political way of life never has been and never will be the way of the many." The primary fallacy of the "democratic mentality of an egalitarian society is that it tends to deny the obvious inability and conspicuous lack of interest of large parts of the population in political matters as such." In a truly Heideggerian vein, she bemoans the fact that in contemporary democratic societies, "authentically political talents can assert themselves only in rare cases." Conversely, with the rule of a self-selected elite

> The joys of public happiness and the responsibilities for public business would then become the share of those few from all walks of life who have a taste for public freedom and cannot be "happy" without it. Politically, they are the best, and it is the task of good government and the sign of a well-ordered republic to assure them of their rightful place in the public realm. To be sure, such an "aristocratic" form of government would spell the end of general suffrage as we understand it today; for only those who as voluntary members of an "elementary republic" have demonstrated that they care for more than their private happiness and are concerned about the state of the world would have the right to be heard in the conduct of business of the republic.

In such passages, Arendt seems remarkably untroubled by the fact that her aristocratic strictures would consign the majority of citizens to an entirely marginal political existence. She entertains with great equanimity "the end of general suffrage." And thereby she reintroduces, on vitalist and existentialist grounds, the odious distinction between active citizens and passive citizens. Her revered political elites manifest

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performative and aesthetic capacities of a superior sort; and in her view these capacities are definitive of authentic political "action." As Margaret Canovan has observed in *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*: "As we explore [Arendt's] theory, the action and self-disclosure that apparently started as general human capacities seem to be narrowed down until they become rare human achievements." Canovan's statement nicely captures the Heideggerian bias of Arendt's political theory as a whole.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt's most important philosophical work, her embrace of political existentialism is unabashed. She proposes a fully aestheticized politics, according to which it is not so much the ends of politics that matter—such an emphasis would be prosaic and utilitarian—as certain "aesthetic" or "theatrical" qualities, by means of which we display our authenticity. As Arendt remarks, "action can be judged only by the criterion of *greatness* because it is in its nature to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where whatever is true in common and everyday life no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and sui generis." Arendt's constant emphasis on the agonistic qualities of public life, on politics as a sphere in which an "action-oriented" elect might distinguish themselves, is pointedly antidemocratic. This is a political ideal that is singularly devoid of altruism or fellow-feeling. For these reasons, it remains irreconcilable with the values of political solidarity that are essential to the notion of democratic citizenship.

After everything, despite everything, the spirit of Marburg lived. •

Native American

BY CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

Writing Was Everything by Alfred Kazin

(Harvard University Press, 168 pp., $17.95)

The greatest literary critic now at work in America? Hard to name anyone to challenge Alfred Kazin; and not just because, having turned 80 this year, he has outlived the competition. What he has over his younger successors (whom he graciously describes as writing literary journalism that is "smarter, more detached, always performing and performative, than it was when I began") is a genuine humility in the presence of major art, and a concomitant capacity to be surprised. This latter gift has not diminished with the years. Without looking them up, I can remember several occasions—a volume of stories by Richard Ford, a lecture on Emily Dickinson at the Folger Library in Washington, a recent review of newly published prose by Isaac Babel—when Kazin seemed to dance on the table with awe and delight. ("Randall at his truest was really an enthusiast," Kazin writes of that supreme reviewer Jarrell; and the same could be said of Kazin.) No wonder Kazin grouses about the present mood in academia, when celebration is the last thing critics—Mark Twain called them crickets—chirp about.

The title of Kazin's Massey Lectures at Harvard implies that today writing *isn't* everything, that something—politics or money—has replaced it. "I have never recovered from the '30s or wanted to," Kazin remarks, while mourning the days when writers such as Henry Roth "still held literature sacred." Dollars damned them, in Kazin's view. "Of course I couldn't know then that one day money would become the main interest of leading novelists whose agents, boasting of million-dollar advances, would display them like rock stars." Display the advances or the novelists, and which "leading novelists" exactly? Updike and Roth, or Stephen King and Anne Rice? In his rage, Kazin specifies neither. Such angry asides are the weakest things in the book, which at its best is not a polemic about the present but a paean, tinged with Kazin's habitual melancholy, to the past. In this wide-ranging and often rueful meditation on one critic's life, he revisits people and places about whom he has written more extensively elsewhere, revising or confirming judgments along the way.

Mark Twain said that for people in the South, the Civil War was what A.D. is elsewhere: things happened "since the waw; or du'in' the waw; or befo' the waw." Kazin's chapter titles are the same, though the war is a different one: "Before," "During" and "After the War." The richest and most vivid of these chapters is the beautiful second one, with its twin epigraphs that link the Civil War and World War II: Whitman's famous assertion that "the real war will never get into the books," and that of the London *Times* correspondent from Belsen, "I have something to report that lies beyond the imagination of mankind."

Kazin spent the last seven months of the war in Great Britain on assignment, covering local dissatisfaction in the armed services and wartime factories. Having recently published his great work on American writing, *On Native Grounds*, Kazin was welcomed by English writers and academics. Orwell was his hero, but Orwell was abroad. The closest Kazin got was Orwell's *Tribune* "cubbyhole," where he could smell "the rough shag tobacco that helped to undo him at the age of 46. But his cigarettes were as near as I ever got to George Orwell." Instead Kazin befriended the Scottish poet Edwin Muir, author of such marvelous—though in America little-known—poems as "The Horses" and "The Mythical Journey" ("First in the North. / The black sea-tangle beaches, / Brine-bitter stillness, tablet-strewn morass..."), and, with his wife Willa, Kafka's first English translator. For Kazin, Muir's "singular purity led to a spiritual revolution in my life (and not only because he translated Kafka)."

This frank appreciation of the religious temperament in literary writing runs throughout *Writing Was Everything*. It is the single most surprising thing about the book. Again and again, Kazin finds the key to an author's work—Orwell, Kafka, Milosz or Bernard Shaw ("the lonely religious nature of his radicalism")—in issues of faith and spiritual striving. After quoting a few stanzas from Hart Crane's invocation to the Brooklyn Bridge ("O harp and altar, of the fury fused, / (How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)..."), Kazin remarks that the passage is "all prayer from someone in dire need," the reading aloud of which "often left me slightly exalted, something rare enough in my experience of current American poetry."

Kazin is cagey about defining too precisely his own religious views, preferring to quote a longish passage from Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, a book that "marked an epoch" in Kazin's life. For Whitehead, not too

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precise himself, "religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things." Especially important for Kazin's critical leanings is Whitehead's insistence that "Above and beyond all things, the religious life is not a research after comfort." Kazin particularly admires writers who have forsworn comfort for higher things.

Kazin traces his experience of the "raw hurting power that a book could have over me" to his childhood reading of *Oliver Twist*, when "what got to me most was Dickens's relentlessness in telling his story." It was trying to make sense of how Dickens worked on him "like a drug" that made Kazin an addict for life: "That was how I started as a critic." For Kazin, "relentlessness" is a term of approval. He finds this quality in abundance in the openly Catholic and distinctly uncomfortable work of Flannery O'Connor, which he judges "our one classic in late twentieth-century American fiction." He concedes that "there are rare lapses into editorial moralizing" in O'Connor's work, "but for the most part her relentlessness holds. Her genius is in the sharp focus of her concentration. People are made absolutes, knives without handles." "Relentless," too, are Faulkner ("the shock of Faulkner's relentlessness" in *Wild Palms*) and Richard Wright ("There is a relentlessness like this in *Native Son*...").

But Kazin reserves his highest and most extended praise for the French writer and philosopher Simone Weil (1909-1943), whom he seems willing to forgive for her "peculiar renunciation of Judaism" and her obsessive attempts to trace Christianity back to Greek philosophy rather than the Old Testament. While Kazin confesses himself "relieved never to have met Simone Weil in person"—the sheer extremity of her temperament could be terrifying, especially during the war years when she starved herself to death out of sympathy for her suffering countrymen—her writings

> startled and moved me at a time when the war had left me with a painful distrust of people in power, of the official world, of the overbearing, relentlessly [a rare pejorative use of the word] radical intellectuals glibly rationalizing and in a sense excusing the Holocaust and Stalin's reprisals against repatriated Russian prisoners of war.

He finds particularly moving Weil's ascription of modern rootlessness to "a lost contact with the world's recollection of divinity," and compares her famous (and Whiteheadian) definition of prayer—"attentiveness without object"—to Emily Dickinson's attentiveness in beginning a poem "without knowing *what* she was beginning."

Dickinson is the occasion for one of Kazin's angriest digs at contemporary critical practice. He devotes several pages to a forceful criticism of the Southern Agrarian writers of the '20s and '30s, who aired their reactionary views in a manifesto called *I'll Take My Stand*, and developed the techniques of close reading that became known as the New Criticism. Kazin argues that the criticism practiced by the Agrarians-turned-New Critics—Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom and the rest—"with its exclusive airs in dissecting the language of poems," was "especially suited to its complacent agenda" (political agenda, that is), and made them deaf to the kinds of naturalistic fiction Kazin wrote about in *On Native Grounds*: "When it came to fiction, the emphasis on intricate, allusive style completely cut out Defoe, Fielding, Dostoevsky, Zola, Dreiser, and other masters of forceful narrative."

But Kazin finds reasons to appreciate his old friend, and friendly antagonist, Allen Tate, "the best of the southern critics and the most intransigently reactionary," a "gentleman-racist" who once "actually refused to shake hands with Langston Hughes." (Kazin gives no details of the occasion specified, but isn't it likely that it was Hughes's leftist politics rather than his race that led to the refusal?) But Tate—and this accounts for Kazin's particular interest in him—published a pivotal essay on Emily Dickinson in 1932, in which he traced her considerable achievement to her moment and milieu:

> When the feisty traditionalist Allen Tate came out for Emily Dickinson, setting her against a background of declining religious belief in New England, he was disapproving of the decline, even condescending about it in his hierarchical southern way. But he did understand the anxious suspension of belief that Dickinson was talking about in her poetry, and hence the tension that makes her glorious.

The reason that Kazin is willing to stomach all this reactionary orthodoxy is that he so much prefers it to more recent criticism of Dickinson's work. He finds particularly offensive a well-publicized session on Dickinson at the Modern Language Association convention in 1989. "The session was called 'The Muse of Masturbation,' and it was thronged," Kazin laments:

> it was noted that the hidden strategy of Emily Dickinson's poetry is in her use of "encoded images of clitoral masturbation to transcend sex-role limitations imposed by the nineteenth-century patriarchy." The basic idea was that Dickinson loaded her work with references to peas, crumbs, and flower buds in order to broadcast secret messages of forbidden onanistic delights to other female illuminati.

Well, easy enough to laugh at, but remember that in *On Native Grounds* Kazin made a name for himself by celebrating the victory of American writers over the genteel prejudices of the nineteenth century. ("To be young then," he writes of the '30s in *Writing Was Everything*, "was just the right time for fighting what in the universities was still the genteel tradition.") Isn't there something genteel, even relentlessly genteel, about Kazin's smirking rejection of masturbation as a possible subtext in Dickinson's poetry? When Kazin returns to Tate later in *Writing Was Everything*, he can't resist bringing up Tate's interpretation of Dickinson again, remarking that the "decay of the New England religious tradition" "certainly seems more to the point than the ideological delirium sweeping the 1990s, when we learn that the key to Emily Dickinson

Fabrication

Tell a lie about a cloud-filled
sky at night, a lie
about the moon it hides.
Tell another about the first scattered
drops of rain from those clouds

baffling only-heaven-can-know
which of the moon's phases. Say there's
a woman looking out a window
into the night muffled by that moon-taker,
thickened and now falling.

Tell what the woman sees
through glass streaking with bits
of clotted sky flown down.
Say the name of what watches her
from the window, now a watery mirror,

wavering. Tell her the face that's gazing
back at her—pale and round—
rose long ago, has since gone down.
Tell her about the moon
you've just undone.

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is clitoral masturbation." But why shouldn't female sexuality be as much a "key" to a major writer as religion? Everyone knows that Dickinson was a great erotic poet, and nobody knows for certain that she didn't die a virgin. Harold Bloom has found masturbation to be an underlying theme in both Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*—pretty good company for Dickinson, and hardly from a critic likely to be accused of "ideological delirium."

Alfred Kazin began his career by writing reviews for this magazine: "As the whale-ship was for Herman Melville, reviewing was to be 'my Yale College and my Harvard.'" In his new book he vividly describes the TNR scene during the '30s, and the subsequent ways in which he has managed to be in the academy but not of it. (This odd man out on campus has a devastating eye for academic enclaves; see his portraits of Black Mountain and Amherst in *New York Jew*.) Kazin has made his resistance to most literary theory and his passionate engagement with his times into major strengths in his work. His vividly written books have been as much a part of American literature as a commentary on it, especially what I take to be his masterpiece, *A Walker in the City*, which begins with his unforgettable evocation of a return to Brownsville:

> Every time I go back to Brownsville it is as if I had never been away. From the moment I step off the train at Rockaway Avenue and smell the leak out of the men's room, then the pickles from the stand just below the subway steps, an instant rage comes over me, mixed with dread and some unexpected tenderness.

In his new book Kazin maintains that "true criticism" is "the ability to state preferences, to make choices on the basis of what is said in the only way available to that particular writer to say it." That's not a rallying cry for much current practice, and Kazin knows it. Moreover, the stress on "stating preferences" sounds more like a reviewer's credo than the broader and deeper understanding that we expect from criticism. Even *On Native Grounds*, recently reissued and still much read, reads at times like a series of reviews—of Faulkner (chided for "the discursive fog" of his style, and "his inability to choose between Dostoevsky and Hollywood Boulevard"), Dreiser, Cather and the rest—rather than a steadily building argument. In this regard, Kazin takes after his model for the true critic, Edmund Wilson, that "relentlessly equipped scholar" who "had such a fine-tuned literary instinct that he considered Dante a steadier, greater craftsman than Shakespeare."

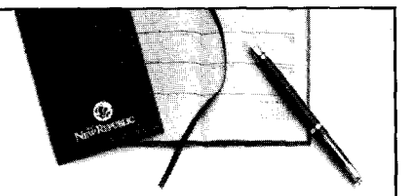
What is finally most poignant, and most lasting, in Kazin's work is not the "stated preferences," but his steady sense of himself as an outsider—the title *New York Jew* declares that status, and the phrase "native grounds" invites an uneasy contrast to European landscapes. His excitement about twentieth-century American writing came from his discovery of a kindred alienation, a pervasive American sense of being on the "outside," among our writers from "those dark and still little-understood years of the 1880s and 1890s" through the Depression. Camus's *The Stranger* (also translated as *The Outsider*) comes in for high praise in *Writing Was Everything*, and Kazin has drawn much of his sustenance from aligning himself with the outsider criticism "written by the creatively great"—Coleridge, Emerson, Baudelaire, T.S. Eliot—rather than with the criticism written by professors inside the academy.

The best passages in *A Walker in the City* evoke the outsider's perspective:

> I felt then that I stood outside all that, that I would be alien forever, but that I could at least keep the trunk open by reading. And though I knew somewhere in myself that a Ryder, an Emily Dickinson, an Eakins, a Whitman, even that fierce-browed old German immigrant Roebling, with his flute and his metaphysics and his passionate love of suspension bridges, were alien, too, alien in the deepest way, like my beloved Blake, my Yeshua [Kazin, unlike Weil, claims Jesus for the Jews: "our own Yeshua ... the very embodiment of everything I have waited so long to hear from a Jew,"] my Beethoven, my Newman—nevertheless I still thought of myself then as standing outside America. I read as if books would fill my every gap, remedy my every flaw, let me in at last into the great world that was anything just out of Brownsville.

Much of the considerable pleasure of reading *Writing Was Everything* comes from Kazin's account of going into that "great world" into which books and writing about books carried him. In his final sentence he makes a prayer for that world, as though its light has been dimmed in recent writing: "But where—how—is the writer to be found who will have the inner certainty to see our life with the eyes of faith, and so make the world shine again?"

CHRISTOPHER BENFEY teaches at Mount Holyoke College and is writing a book on Degas and New Orleans during Reconstruction.



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High Fidelity

BY TZVETAN TODOROV

The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism by Octavio Paz

(Harcourt Brace, 276 pp., $22)

The modern world is one of specialization and professionalization; the increasing complexity of knowledge demands it. Books reflect this state of affairs: if they are written by specialists, they are addressed to other specialists, and if they seek to address the public at large, outside the frontiers of specific disciplines, then they must be written by professional vulgarizers, by men and women of the media. Studies of man and society have been, until recently, exceptions to this rule, but their practitioners believed this to be a handicap: if their works remained accessible to all, they must have said to themselves, then the authors would not be considered real experts; and so they, in turn, have enforced this distinction. There is an abyss between the handful of professional readers and the broader public.

And so one has the impression, on reading Octavio Paz's new book on love, of coming across a survivor, a kind of miracle, and this impression is certainly positive. Here is a man who knows as much as the greatest specialists about the most important human passion, and yet who, far from bending to the rules of what he himself calls "a tedious university chair," addresses himself to the common reader, in a language at once poetic and comprehensible. *The Double Flame* may not be Paz's finest book; it does not radically alter our understanding of love. Still, better than countless "specialized" undertakings, it provides an occasion for reflection on the inexhaustible mysteries of love, which have engaged humanity for thousands of years.

Paz's book is comprised of two strands, which he calls the history of love and the geography of love. The former describes the transformations of the emotion over time, in the Occident and the Orient alike, as they are revealed in literature, philosophy and religion; and the latter, its frontiers, its subdivisions, its distinguishing characteristics. Let us begin with the "geography." Paz identifies three concentric circles, or better, three strata of a pyramid. At its base is sexuality, which we share with animals and whose goal is reproduction. The pleasure which some species take in its practice is only a means, a stimulant, to that procreative goal. But humankind is the only species to have turned that means into an end: we engage in sexual activity the sole purpose of which is pleasure. This is what we call eroticism. Finally, love is a particular erotic relationship, one in which our partner cannot be replaced by another. I love to make love: that is eroticism. I love this man, this woman: that is love. I love this sex, this belly, this arm: that is eroticism. I love this body and this face, hence this body and this soul, in their unique encounter which constitutes this person: that is love.

Since antiquity, we have been in the habit of distinguishing sexual love from other affective relations: say, between parents and children, or between friends. Paz is faithful to this tradition: the emotion which ties parents and children is not love, as he defines it here, because it is imposed upon us from outside, by necessity, rather than by choice; because it is not motivated by a search for reciprocity; because obstacles don't play an important role here; and because there is no eroticism involved. Friendship is closer to love, because it shares with it the moment of choice, and because the individuality of the friend is irreplaceable. But in friendship, too, there is no sexual element; reciprocity is not simply sought, it is essential. (I cannot live a friendship alone.) Friendship is also more reasonable than love: I do not choose a friend simply because she has beautiful eyes or freckles on her cheeks, but because we have similar tastes and opinions. For this reason, friendship fits more easily into the social fabric.

A recent work by the young French philosopher André Comte-Sponville called *Petit Traité des Grandes Vertus*, which also directs itself to the common reader rather than to specialists, has happily reconceived this question of an affective "geography," and it is useful to compare Comte-Sponville's propositions with Paz's. Comte-Sponville notes that (in English as in French) the word "love" is the translation of three terms from classical Greek: eros, philia, agape. Leaving to one side this last term (which deals with Christian brotherly love, also called "charity"), we can establish that philia corresponds not only to friendship, even if that is its most common meaning, but also to the love of mothers for their children, and even to that of husband and wife within a couple. The difference between eros and philia lies, therefore, not in the presence or absence of sexuality but, Comte-Sponville suggests, in the place occupied by the other with regard to the ego. The other is either the end or the means of my affection.

Eros, in the mainstream European tradition from Plato to Lacan, as described in the well-known *Love in the Western World* by Denis de Rougement, is possessive desire, in which I require the other for my own pleasure. It is, at the same time, the desire for a lack: I love love more than its object. Difficulties and obstacles augment my desire; and the presence and availability of the beloved, on the other hand, diminish it. Literature has so abundantly exploited the narrative structure of eros, from Tristan and Isolde to Proust, that we sometimes have a tendency to conflate it with love. But there is another love, that in which the beloved is celebrated for who he or she is, not for what he or she brings me. It is not a love constituted by lack, but by joy at the simple existence of another. Here, one seeks to give rather than to take. Philia is its name, and it diversifies according to its objects: children for parents, a friend for a friend or, extended to the body, men and women.

Comte-Sponville's hierarchy is different from Paz's. Love is no longer a variety of eroticism, but an emotion which may or may not be combined with sexuality. On the other hand, the opposition between the two modes of love—love-lack and love-joy, covetous love and benevolent love, as the theologians would put it—is barely remarked upon by Paz, who considers obstacles (an accessory of eros) to be characteristic of all love, and who notes only, in a sentence left unembellished, that "true love consists precisely of the transformation of the appetite for possession into surrender." That a mother does not choose to have one child rather than another does not prevent her from encountering this alternative.

Comte-Sponville and Paz would agree, however, that the first condition of love is the irreplaceable, exclusive personality of the beloved. Without even needing to recognize the fact, we make philosophical and even political choices when we

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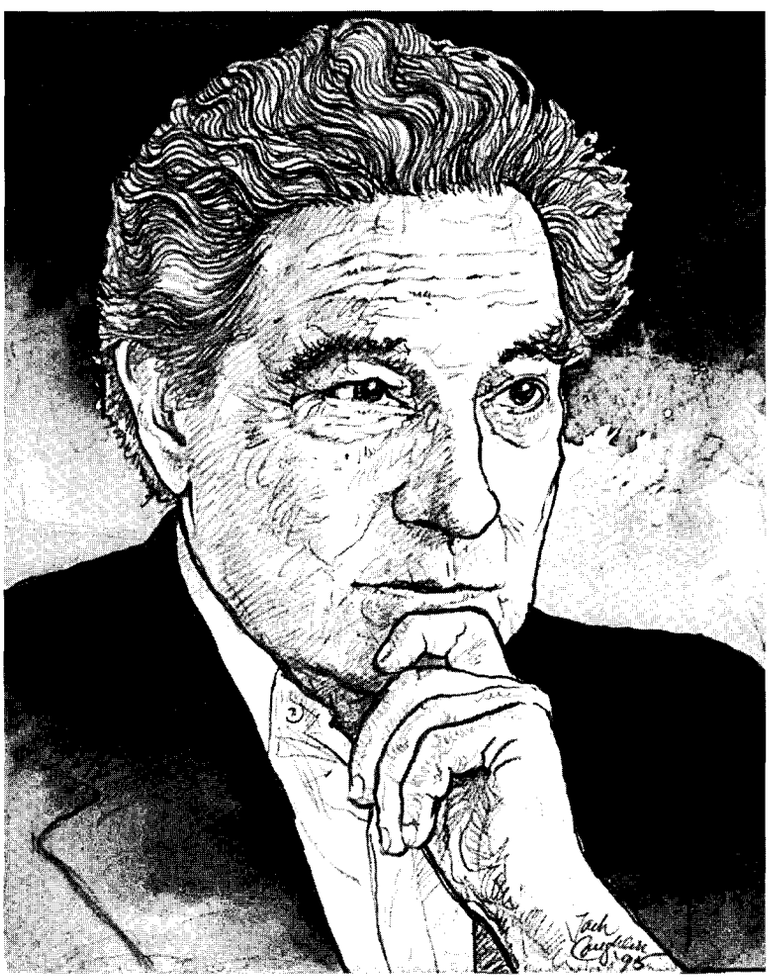
love: we postulate that the human individual is irreducible and insurpassable; and, since we are unique because of our freedom (otherwise we would be machines or animals, part of a series and not individuals), love is also a celebration of human freedom. Why do we choose this person rather than another? This is a question to which we will never have an adequate answer, an enigma that poets have only been able to replace with other enigmas: so it is with the myth of the original androgyne, in Aristophanes, of which the two halves continue to seek one another, or with the magic philtre, for Tristan and Isolde. On the other hand, we better understand from this perspective the place of fidelity: it is only a reformulation of that which constitutes love, the unique personality of the being that inspires it. To love is, at least in principle, to keep for this person alone actions and attitudes which will not be shared with anyone else. To love is to be faithful.

Paz identifies several other characteristics of love. It is a voluntary servitude, a submission freely undertaken. It is also a permanent conversion of the flesh into spirit, of the spirit into flesh: a profane eucharist. From this originates, perhaps, our desire to see love last forever. We know all too well that we are mortal, that even before dying we will age and grow ugly, that routine, lassitude and anxiety gnaw away at love, and yet we are perfectly sincere when we declare, I will love you forever. This, too, is part of the very definition of love. One could say that we live, when we love, a unique and ennobling experience which consists of producing the absolute out of the relative, the necessary with the accidental, eternity with fleeting moments. Thus all loves are unhappy, because death and destruction will always triumph—and yet there is nothing to regret because "life is a continual risk; to live is to expose oneself." It is through love that we realize the human condition.

The history of love that Paz proposes is fragmentary; it could not be otherwise in a book of this size. The loving emotion is universal, and only its representation changes over time, according to Paz, but he does not take into account the work of historians of the family and of sexuality. He prefers instead to gloss a number of the most remarkable works devoted to love. Plato's *Symposium*, an obligatory reference, does not really deal with love in Paz's sense, but with eroticism: it does not take into consideration the personal identity of the beloved, it does not attest to the exclusive nature of love. For complementary reasons, the fundamental texts of Christianity do not refer to love: agape, charity, is a universal love, which specifically disregards the qualities or faults of the individual upon whom it is bestowed. Moreover, the loved one is only a mediation for the love borne to God (to love the creature rather than the Creator is tantamount to idolatry), quite unlike what occurs in true love, where the beloved is intransitive and refers to nothing beyond himself.

In Europe, there is a prehistory of love in the works of Greek and Latin poets such as Sappho, Theocritus, Catullus and Propertius, in particular in the cities where women acquired an initial social autonomy; and a true history of love, dating from the invention of courtly love by the Provençal poets in the twelfth century (who were themselves the heirs to the Arab discourse of the erotic), by which point the beloved is unique and irreplaceable. After several pauses over other moments in the history of love in Europe, Paz reflects on its place today. Leaving aside totalitarian societies, where the individual is in any event subject to the collectivity and where, in consequence, love can only play a subordinate role, Paz considers instead the fate of this emotion in democratic polities.



OCTAVIO PAZ BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Are open societies propitious for the blossoming of love? Paz concludes that they are not. "We have seen twilight gradually creeping over the image of love in our society." Eroticism has been killed by its overexposure in business and advertising, as it has by sexual promiscuity. Love itself is threatened by contemporary debates about the notion of personhood: the ideology of scientism which rules all around us seeks to extend the domain of the necessary at the expense of that of liberty, by reducing our mental activities to their biological origins, or by comparing the brain to a computer. But without liberty there are no more individuals, and without individuals there is no more love. What we need is a "poetic" ideology to emerge as a counterweight to the excessive prestige enjoyed among us by scientific thought.

A human being is not sufficient unto himself; he needs others to exist. And it is love that is the most beautiful connection with another, the tie that recognizes both his humanity and his uniqueness, which enables me to give the best of myself. "It is not the return to the waters of origin but the attainment of a state that reconciles us to our having been driven out of paradise." Since paradise was not made for human beings, love leads to the only felicity available to us.

—Translated by Claire Messud

TZVETAN TODOROV's most recent book is *The Morals of History* (University of Minnesota Press).

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

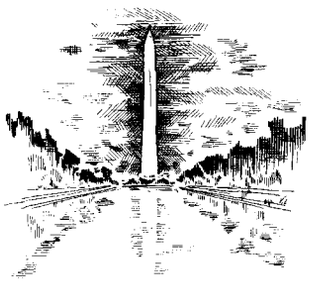
Grover

PRESIDENT KENNEDY, WE'RE REminded by his biographers, understood the need for politicians to maintain their public dignity at all costs. When Hugh Sidey of *Time* playfully reported that Kennedy had posed with his family for the cover of *Gentleman's Quarterly*, "modelling a trimly tailored dark gray suit," Kennedy became apoplectic at the thought that he might be considered frivolous or effeminate for appearing in a flashy men's fashion magazine. "Anybody who read this would think I was crazy," he raged at Sidey, according to Richard Reeves. "Any president who would pose for *Gentleman's Quarterly* would be out of his mind."

WITH THE PUBLICATION OF *George*, which aspires to be a cross between *GQ* and *CQ*, Kennedy's only son has squandered the most valuable remainder of his father's legacy. Now the Kennedys breathily abase themselves before movie stars and models, rather than the other way around. What's unsettling about *George* is not so much the articles and photographs, which manage, for example, to glamorize Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform as Washington's most desirable *saloniste*. What's unsettling is the revelation that the heir of JFK is, in fact, the heir of Jackie O., combining his mother's disdain for politics with her passion for fashion. "Political figures are increasingly written about as the personalities and pop icons they have become," Kennedy gushes. "Recognizing that interest in 'inside Washington' is thin beyond the Beltway, we will define politics extravagantly, from elected officials to media moguls to movie stars to ordinary citizens." As the Supreme Court and the Congress propose to dismantle the New Deal in front of his aquiline nose, Kennedy has concluded that what America needs most is a "lifestyle magazine," which he defines as "post-partisan."

KENNEDY'S EDITORIAL VISION IS eerily similar to that of Mariel Hemingway, who plays the editor of *Communiqué*, the glossy new magazine at the center of CBS's glossy new soap opera, "Central Park West." "I want this to be a magazine that both men and women will read to understand their world a little better," Hemingway's character declares in the first episode. In a mischievous twist, the writers of "CPW" have invented a JFK Jr. character, the rich and dashing "Peter Fairchild," son of the martyred "Senator Fairchild." Peter now works as an Assistant District Attorney in New York; his stepfather, a Rupert Murdoch caricature, owns *Communiqué*. Ironically, the modest and hardworking "Peter Fairchild" comes across not as an epigone of JFK Jr. but as a more three-dimensional character than the real "John Kennedy," who turned up this week in a guest appearance on "Murphy Brown," playing himself playing a magazine editor.

THERE'S LITTLE HINT of post-partisanship in *The Weekly Standard*, the new conservative weekly, which also published its maiden issue last week. The *Standard* is everything *George* and *Communiqué* aren't: homely, focused on the gritty details of legislation and ideological to the point of seeming hermetically sealed. For all these reasons, I like it a lot, and wish it every success. But the *Standard* will have to resist the temptation to descend into John-Johnism by becoming a fanzine for Newt Gingrich. The cover of the first issue bears a heroic cartoon of the Speaker as Rambo, painted in the Socialist Realist style, adorned by the triumphalist headline, "PERMANENT OFFENSE." In a revealing aside, Gingrich tells Fred Barnes that his models for the "permanent offense" are William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and the Republican strategist Mark Hanna, who vanquished the reactionary Democrat William Jennings Bryan. Never mind Gingrich's improbable invocation of the puppetmaster Hanna, a cross between William Simon and Lyn Nofziger who extorted huge contributions from the Rockefellers and the Morgans in the service of a big-government economic nationalism that represents everything the states-rights obsessed Gingrich purports to reject. The better analogy is to the ascendancy of congressional government in the late 1880s and 1890s, largely presided over by the autocratic Republican speaker, "Czar" Thomas B. Reed of Maine, who dominated several forgettable presidents. He ruthlessly enforced party discipline with the "Reed Rules," a precursor of the Contract with America. And with the help of a conservative Supreme Court, he dismantled the egalitarian legacy of the Reconstruction Republicans while pandering to the industrial monopolies. Meanwhile, a weak but honest Democratic president, Grover Cleveland, saved his two administrations from irrelevance by wielding his veto with a vengeance. He stayed up until two in the morning, laboriously vetoing hundreds of special-interest pension bills by hand, and he lost the 1888 campaign because of his honorable opposition to the McKinley tariffs. At last, a way for Bill Clinton to win back the support of Democrats whose hearts he has broken. All he has to do is embrace Cleveland as his model, vetoing the excesses of the contract, clause by clause. And if Clinton, like Cleveland, is brought down by his principles and his sexual indiscretions in 1996 ("Ma, Ma, where's my Pa?"), he can follow in the worthy footsteps of "the Veto President" by trying again in 2000.



AS HILLARY CLINton's sharp and effective speech about human rights at the Women's Conference in Beijing shows, not all Democrats suffer from the post-partisan disease. Still, Mrs. Clinton might take a perfumed page from *George* and reveal a little of the personality behind her earnest mugwumpery. Her syndicated newspaper column was supposed to humanize her in the way that "My Day" humanized Eleanor Roosevelt, but the initial efforts seem to be having the opposite effect. The headlines are relentlessly stentorian: "EVERY WOMAN EVERYWHERE DESERVES BASIC RESPECT AND DIGNITY"; "REMEMBER THOSE WHO HELPED WIN WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE"; and best of all, "HELPING HAND IS GIVEN TO MOTHER TERESA." As for the columns themselves, they read more like ghost-written stump speeches than acts of personal revelation. "If we take bold steps to better the lives of women, we will be taking bold steps to better the lives of children and families, too," intones the most recent dispatch. Contrast this with Eleanor Roosevelt's candidly human public diaries, scribbled at all hours of the day and night. As Doris Kearns Goodwin recalls in *No Ordinary Time*, Eleanor once became furious when FDR failed to tell her in advance that Churchill was dropping in for an overnight visit. "It had not occurred to him," she wrote angrily in her column, "that this might require certain moving of furniture to adapt rooms to the purposes for which the Prime Minister wished to use them." Then again, perhaps Mrs. Clinton doesn't have the luxury of diaristic candor. Imagine the column she might have written after the president bowed to Janet Reno's decision to appoint a special Whitewater prosecutor: "It had not occurred to him that this might require certain moving of furniture...."

JEFFREY ROSEN

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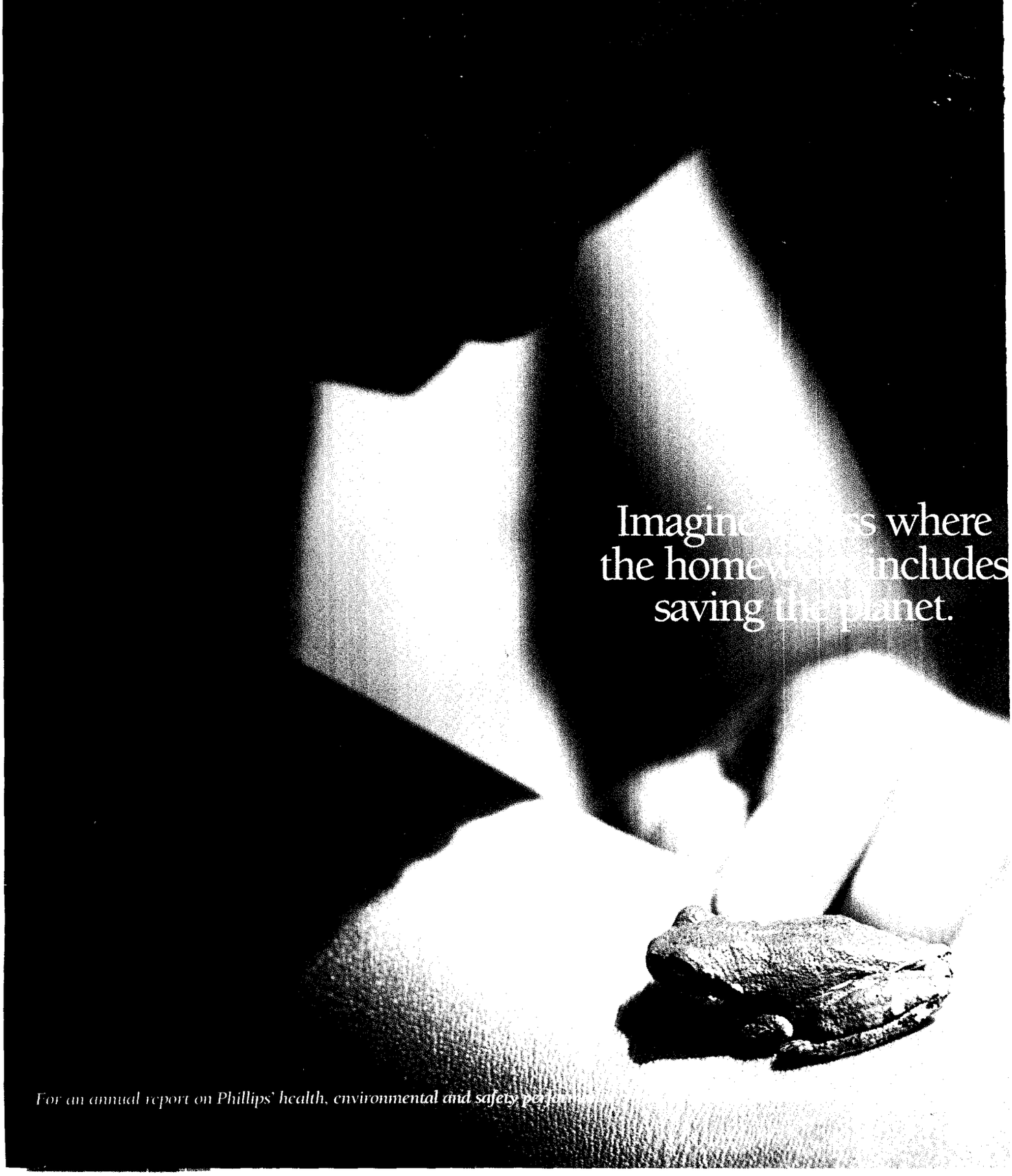

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